

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi – “Our Ancestors Are In Us”:
Strengthening Our Voices Through Language Revitalization
From A Tahltan Worldview

by

Edōsdi, Judith Charlotte Thompson

B.Sc., Simon Fraser University, 1994

M.Sc., University of Victoria, 2005

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Interdisciplinary Studies

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University of Victoria

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Supervisory Committee

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Dr. Gloria J. Snively, Member
(Department of Curriculum and Instruction)

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Abstract

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Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi – “Our Ancestors Are In Us,” describes a Tahltan worldview, which is based on the connection Tahltan people have with our Ancestors, our land, and our language. From this worldview, I have articulated a Tahltan methodology, Tahltan Voiceability, which involves receiving the teachings of our Ancestors and Elders, learning and knowing these teachings, and the sharing of these teachings with our people. By giving voice to our Ancestors and Elders, as well as to all of our people, it sets the stage for research that is useful, relational, and transformative.

Tahltan Voiceability speaks not only to the methodology of this study, but also the way in which the voices of my people can gain strength and healing from the revitalization of our language. Conversations with fluent speakers, language teachers, educators, administrators, and language learners informed this investigation with their ideas and experiences regarding Tahltan language revitalization. The learnings from the research are presented in such a way as to honour all voices, using different modes of written expression woven throughout the dissertation. The organization of the

dissertation is based upon physical manifestations – examples of art – that have played key roles in my Tahltan journey.

This investigation addressed the following questions: How can Tahltan language revitalization positively affect the lives of my people? In the past and present, what has been done to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language? In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language? In terms of positive effects, language revitalization can be the start of a process in which we begin to heal from the impacts of past losses by reclaiming our language, culture, and identity, thereby allowing our voices to become stronger and healthier. My people need to identify the steps and actions we need to take in the areas of health, education, social development, and Aboriginal rights and title, so that we can revitalize our language and heal at the same time. From what I learned from co-researchers, scholars who have worked with our Tahltan communities, other Indigenous community language revitalization experts, and international language revitalization scholars, I have provided suggestions to a newly formed Tahltan Language Authority dealing with the assessment of the language, community support, and language revitalization programs being used in British Columbia and other parts of the world. Finally, I speak about Tahltan identity, the process of language revitalization, and the connection between language revitalization and healing as forms of empowerment for my people.

Table of Contents

SUPERVISORY COMMITTEE.....	II
ABSTRACT	III
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF TABLES.....	IX
LIST OF FIGURES	X
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	XI
DEDICATION.....	XIV
<i>ESŁADINDI: “GIVE ME YOUR HAND”</i>	1
- WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION	1
LOCATING MYSELF IN THE RESEARCH – MY NARRATIVE	1
<i>Learning who I am as a Tahltan.</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>The disconnect between generations.</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>My journey to a Tahltan research framework and Tahltan methodology.</i>	<i>9</i>
From a Western to an Indigenous research paradigm.	13
...And then to Tahltan Voiceability.	16
NAMING OF THE DISSERTATION.....	18
PRESENTATION OF VOICES	20
TERMINOLOGY.	22
<i>Teachers.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>Teachings.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Co-researchers.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Learnings.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Review of written and spoken voices.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Gathering of the learnings.</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Presentation of the learnings.</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Sharing of the learnings.....</i>	<i>24</i>
THE ARTISTRY OF RESEARCH	25
THE FRAMEWORK FOR MY DISSERTATION	30
RATIONALE.....	36
PURPOSE OF STUDY.....	38
A JOURNEY TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	38
<i>KĀKHA’Ū TS’EDE EDEDAGE ASLA: “I MADE A BUTTON BLANKET FOR MYSELF”</i>	42
- INTRODUCTION OF MY PEOPLE, OUR LAND, OUR LANGUAGE	42
MY PEOPLE.....	44
<i>Tahltan clan system.....</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>Tahltan family system.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Tahltan governance.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>My teachers.....</i>	<i>51</i>
<i>Co-researchers.....</i>	<i>59</i>
OUR LAND.....	67
<i>Our communities</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Mount Edziza.....</i>	<i>69</i>
<i>Sacred Headwaters.....</i>	<i>70</i>

<i>Tahltan Declaration</i>	70
OUR LANGUAGE	72
KISHEGWET EJINH ESGHANI'ĀN: "ROSIE DENNIS GAVE ME A SONG"	74
-A TAHLTAN RESEARCH FRAMEWORK FROM A TAHLTAN WORLDVIEW	74
HEDEKEYEH HOTS'IH KĀHIDI: A TAHLTAN WORLDVIEW	77
TAHLTAN ETHICS.....	81
<i>Immediate relational accountability</i>	84
<i>Ongoing relational accountability</i>	87
MY TAHLTAN METHODOLOGY – TAHLTAN VOICEABILITY	88
GATHERING OF THE LEARNINGS – METHODS	93
<i>Conversations with co-researchers</i>	95
<i>The voice of Edōsdi</i>	98
PRESENTATION OF THE LEARNINGS	98
<i>Poetic transcriptions</i>	106
<i>Poetry</i>	110
<i>Stories and narratives</i>	111
<i>Songs</i>	112
ESTSIYE MEBADE ESGHANI'ĀN: "MY GRANDFATHER GAVE ME HIS MITTENS"	114
- PRESENTATION OF THE LEARNINGS	114
HOW CAN TAHLTAN LANGUAGE REVITALIZATION POSITIVELY AFFECT THE LIVES OF MY PEOPLE? 118	
<i>Who we are as Tahltan: Connection to our language, our land, our Ancestors</i>	118
<i>Survival of Aboriginal languages in Canada</i>	126
<i>Language revitalization and healing</i>	138
<i>The meaning of healing in an Indigenous context</i>	143
Health	143
Wellness	144
Healing	144
<i>Language and culture as protective factors</i>	145
<i>The meaning of healing in a Tahltan context</i>	149
IN THE PAST AND PRESENT, WHAT HAS BEEN DONE TO MAINTAIN, PRESERVE, AND REVITALIZE OUR TAHLTAN LANGUAGE?.....	152
<i>Assessing the status of the Tahltan language</i>	153
Usage.....	153
Community	154
Home.....	154
On the land	154
Workplace.....	155
Community events	155
Educational institutes.....	156
Pre-school programs	156
K-12 school programs.....	159
Post-secondary programs.....	159
Resources.....	162
Human resources.....	162
Speakers	163
Language teachers	163
Community members.....	164
Organizations	164
Tahltan Central Council.....	164
School District 87 (Stikine).....	167
Tahltan health authorities	168
Stikine Wholistic Working Group	168

Consultants.....	170
Documentation resources.....	170
Linguistic materials and publications.....	171
Dictionaries and grammar guides.....	171
Classroom materials.....	172
Recordings.....	177
Technology.....	179
IN THE FUTURE, WHAT DO MY PEOPLE NEED TO DO TO CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN, PRESERVE, AND REVITALIZE THE TAHLTAN LANGUAGE?.....	180
<i>Formation of a Tahltan Language Authority.....</i>	180
1. Language status.....	182
2. Community support.....	184
Community awareness.....	186
Leadership/organizations.....	189
3. Research.....	191
Healing.....	192
Language Programs.....	193
Children/Youth.....	193
Pre-school programs.....	193
K-12 school programs.....	196
Immersion programs.....	199
Parents/Adults.....	203
Post-secondary programs.....	204
Master-apprentice program.....	205
All ages.....	207
Language and culture camps.....	207
Cultural activities.....	207
Human resources.....	209
Certification of language teachers.....	209
Teacher training.....	211
Community training.....	215
Documentation resources.....	217
Funding resources.....	226
ESDIDENE DAGA HOSJINH: “I WILL SING A SONG FOR MY PEOPLE”	230
– SHARING OF THE LEARNINGS.....	230
APPLICATIONS OF THE LEARNINGS.....	231
<i>Promotion of the language outside of Tahltan territory.....</i>	232
<i>Language revitalization as a form of empowerment.....</i>	234
Tahltan identity.....	235
Raising up our children.....	236
Raising up our Elders.....	238
The process of language revitalization.....	239
Language revitalization and healing.....	240
FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH.....	241
<i>Language revitalization.....</i>	241
<i>The role of healing in language revitalization.....</i>	242
<i>Indigenous research frameworks and methodologies.....</i>	242
COMING BACK FULL CIRCLE TO KAKHA’U TS’EDE EDEDAGE ASLA	247
REFERENCES.....	252
APPENDIX A: TAHLTAN DECLARATION	279
APPENDIX B: TAHLTAN LANGUAGE PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY	280
APPENDIX C: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE.....	282

APPENDIX D: LETTERS OF INTENT	283
APPENDIX E: LETTERS OF APPROVAL	284
APPENDIX F: CONSENT FORMS	287
APPENDIX G: DRAFT TAHLTAN LANGUAGE CONVERSATION COURSES.....	293

List of Tables

TABLE 1. SECTIONS IN MY DISSERTATION	33
TABLE 2: CREATING A POETIC TRANSCRIPTION	110
TABLE 3. ORGANIZATION OF THE LEARNINGS FOR RESEARCH QUESTION 2	153
TABLE 4. ASSESSING THE STATUS OF THE TAHLTAN LANGUAGE – USAGE	154
TABLE 5. ASSESSING THE STATUS OF THE TAHLTAN LANGUAGE – DOCUMENTATION RESOURCES	171
TABLE 6: TAHLTAN LANGUAGE PRACTICAL ORTHOGRAPHY.....	280

List of Figures

FIGURE 1: WALLACE AND CATHRYN THOMPSON.....	XIV
FIGURE 2: JULIA AND CHARLES CALLBREATH.....	XIV
FIGURE 3: ELIZABETH WEBB.....	XV
FIGURE 4. MY BUTTON BLANKET.....	42
FIGURE 5. MAP OF TAHLTAN TERRITORY.....	68
FIGURE 6. ROSIE DENNIS SINGING THE DREAM SONG.....	74
FIGURE 7. MY GRANDFATHER’S MITTENS.....	114
FIGURE 8. MY GRANDFATHER AND HIS MITTENS.....	114
FIGURE 9. MY DRUM.....	230
FIGURE 10: MY BUTTON BLANKET.....	247
FIGURE 11. MY DOROTHY GRANT RAVEN DRESS.....	248
FIGURE 12. GRANDPA’S GWĒĹ, BY LINDA BOB.....	249
FIGURE 13. MY CHILKAT HEADADDRESS, BY WILLIAM WHITE.....	249
FIGURE 14. GRANDPA’S MITTEN.....	250
FIGURE 15. MY MOCCASINS, BY <i>EDŌSDI</i>	250
FIGURE 16. <i>TEHKAHCHE GWĒĹ</i> , BY VALERIE MORGAN.....	251

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Dedication

To my parents:



Figure 1: Wallace and Cathryn Thompson

To my mother, *Tsi' Tsa'*, who is one of my best friends and who helped me complete this dissertation by doing the little things – walking Pawna, making salads and cookies for me – basically helping take care of my baby and keeping me fed while I wrote! You have always inspired me to do my best and to never quit once I've begun something. *Nedishchā*.

To my father, *Maaxsku'm T'im Ges* (pet name given to him by his grandmother), who was always there to support my dreams, educational or otherwise. I love you and miss you so so much.

Wallace Irvine Thompson Sr.
Gitxsan Nation, *Giskaast* Clan (Fireweed/Killer Whale), *Gutgunuxws* (Owl)
 July 11, 1932 – June 26, 2010

To my mother's parents, Julia and Charles Callbreath:



Figure 2: Julia and Charles Callbreath

To my Grandpa Charley and Granny Julia: *Mēduh* for allowing me to take you home to Tahltan territory so many times and for teaching me so much about our people, our ways of knowing, our culture, our language. You both made learning Tahltan fun and engaging. I am so proud to call myself your *chā. Nedishchā.*

Eyakta', Charles Callbreath
Tahltan Nation, *Tsesk'iye* Clan, *Nālotine* territory
 March 14, 1909 – October 22, 2010

Kāshā, Julia Callbreath (nee Vance)
Tahltan Nation, *Tsesk'iye* Clan, *Tlabānotine* territory
 September 10, 1916 – August 5, 2012

To my father's mother, Elizabeth Webb:



Figure 3: Elizabeth Webb

To my Granny Elizabeth: Of the three grandparents I knew, you were the only one able to speak your language fluently and I never learned of your fluency in Gitx̱san until long after you passed away. I got my love for making things from you, whether it was knitting, embroidering, crocheting, or sewing. You always made me want to do my best, whether it was in school or when creating things with my hands. When I'd visit you in Vancouver, you would tell people, "This is my granddaughter Judy. She's going to university...and she knitted that sweater!"

Elizabeth Webb (nee Lowrie)
Gitx̱san Nation, *Gisḵaast* Clan (Fireweed/Killer Whale), *Gutgunuxws* (Owl)
 November 3, 1907 – March 4, 1986

ESŁADINDI: “Give Me Your Hand”

– Welcome and Introduction to the Dissertation

My Elders have told me that there is no Tahltan word for welcome; that what we say instead is, *Esladindi* – give me your hand. So, I extend my hand to you and invite you to join me on this journey of Tahltan language revitalization.

Locating Myself in the Research – My Narrative

Aboriginal researchers Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett (2005) speak to the importance of locating oneself in their research:

...one of the most fundamental principles of Aboriginal research methodology is the necessity for the researcher to locate himself or herself. Identifying, at the outset, the location from which the voice of the researcher emanates is an Aboriginal way of ensuring that those who study, write, and participate in knowledge creation are accountable for their own positionality.... The actual research cannot take place without the trust of the community, and one way to gain trust is to locate yourself (p. 97).

With those words, I offer a narrative of who I am and how I have come to be on this journey of Tahltan language revitalization.

*Edōsdi ushye.
Tahltan didene jus'ini.
Tlegohin Łuwe Chon hos didene huside nasde.
Tsesk'iye ja'us'dey.
Tlabānotine usi'dey.
Tehkahche esja'dey edida.*

*My name is Judy Thompson and my Tahltan name is Edōsdi,
which means “someone who raises up children and pets.”
I am a member of the Tahltan Nation*

*and my people are from Telegraph Creek and Iskut.
I am a member of the Crow Clan,
our territory is Tlabānotine,
and the Frog is our crest.*

My parents are Cathryn (nee Callbreath) and Wallace Thompson. Cathryn is the daughter of Julia (nee Vance) and Charles Callbreath. My people have a matrilineal society and so I am of the same clan as my mother and grandmother. My maternal grandfather was a member of the Crow Clan and his territory was Nalotine. My father's parents were Elizabeth (nee Lawrie) and Alvin Thompson. My paternal grandmother was a member of the Fireweed clan (*Gisk̄aast*) from the Gitx̄san community of Gitwangak. My paternal grandfather was of Norwegian descent from Minnesota, USA.

My story of learning my Tahltan language began back in 1991 and so this dissertation marks the 20th anniversary of that journey. Back in the early 1990s, I began to learn more about who I was as a First Nations person, but more specifically, a Tahltan woman. In the summer of 1991, I visited Tahltan territory for the first time with my grandparents. Who I am has been influenced by what I have learned from my Elders and this has helped me to see the world through my Ancestors' eyes – a view I did not have growing up. This paradigm shift has helped me to understand who I am as a Tahltan and how the teachings of my Elders and Ancestors can be used to carry out respectful and useful research in my roles as student, educator and researcher. This journey that I am on involves moving from the western academic perspective that I have grown up with, to the Tahltan worldview I am coming to know and that feels right to me – *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*. In order to articulate this paradigm shift, I need to locate myself in the research, to articulate why I feel the need to do such work, how I have come to be on this journey, and to show how such research will be relevant and useful to my people. It is vital that I

not only tell of my research journey, but that I also honour all of my teachers – Ancestors, Elders, family members, friends, university professors, and fellow graduate students – who have helped me and given me gifts of knowledge, wisdom and support along the way.

Learning who I am as a Tahltan. It is important to outline how I have come to this point in my journey. In the years before I became aware of my Ancestors, I was raised in mainstream Canadian society in which I excelled academically, athletically, and socially. While I felt accepted by my peers and society, when I look back, I can now see that there was an underlying current of racism. There were many incidents in my formative years that made me aware that I was First Nations but they were often accompanied by a latent sense of shame. These instances usually just highlighted that I was Aboriginal, but never gave me any answers to what that really meant, or to who I was. If I didn't know who I was as a First Nations person, then there was no way in which I could be connected to my Ancestors.

The first inkling I had that I was First Nations was in the summer of 1970 when I was five years old. I was wearing my long brown hair in braids, I was tall and skinny, and my skin was brown. I was playing with my sisters when a girl new to the neighbourhood came up to me and asked me, “Are you an Indian?” I honestly did not know because I didn't know what an “Indian” was. Now, why didn't I know that I was a Tahltan, or for that matter, an “Indian”? We didn't learn about that at school, and we certainly didn't discuss it at home. The only times I recall learning about First Nations people in any depth was in grades four and ten. In the grade four social studies curriculum, we learned about the Plains or Prairie “Indians,” mainly because they were

seen to be the stereotypical “Indian”, with their horses, feather headdresses, tomahawks, and peacepipes. We definitely did not learn about the Ts’msyen, the First Nation upon whose territory my school was located.

In high school, the grade ten social studies curriculum included a unit on the fur trade. One of the assignments involved writing a paragraph on the interdependency between the fur traders and the Natives. Similar to the previous curricular example, the fur trade focused on a part of Canada far removed from Coastal British Columbia. I diligently wrote my paragraph outlining all of the points listed in the textbook that “proved” that both the fur traders and the Natives were dependent upon each other for their survival. I’m sure that in 1980, such a perspective taken by the mainstream education system in regards to Aboriginal peoples was seen to be both progressive and positive. However, a friend of mine looked at it from a different perspective. He wrote a paragraph in which he stated that there was no interdependency between the two groups and that if it weren’t for the Native people, the fur traders would not have survived! I was so amazed with that idea – not so much with the idea that the Natives did not need the fur traders to survive, but that he had come up with that idea outside of what the textbook had written. I remember thinking, “Why didn’t I think of that?” especially since I was First Nations, and my friend was not. This instance is a perfect example of what a well-trained student I was in this western academic school environment in regards to ingesting whatever I read from the textbooks and what my teachers told me in order to get the “A”. I knew how to jump through the hoops, and I definitely stayed within the confines of this “box,” unlike my friend.

As a young adult in university, a friend asked me about my ethnicity. I recall listing all of the different Caucasian bloods, and then ending it with "...and Native." I still remember how my voice trailed off quietly when ending that sentence. I felt ashamed that I was Aboriginal, but didn't really know why. As well, while I definitely now knew that I was "Native", I still didn't know who my people were or where they were from.

After 1985, when the Indian Act was amended and Bill C31 was added, my maternal grandparents and parents began looking into getting their "Indian status" reinstated. During this bureaucratic process, I noticed that my grandparents began to share more and more about their Tahltan heritage. Their willingness to share their culture sparked my desire to learn about who I am as a Tahltan person, and it was then that my "true" education began.

By 1991, my siblings, myself, and my parents and grandparents were officially considered "Status Indians." That was also the year that I first visited Tahltan territory with my grandparents. In the prologue of her dissertation in which she locates herself in her research by using poetry, Cree scholar Maggie Kovach (2006) captures, from her experience, how I felt:

Under the vastness of the luminous sky
I stand shivering on this sacred Plains earth
Breathing the air of my ancestors,
And know that I am home (p. x).

Around the same time period that I visited the home of my Ancestors for the first time, I was reading Amy Tan's novel, *The Joy Luck Club*. Amy Tan was born and raised in the United States to parents who had come from China. I recall reading about the author's background in which Tan wrote about taking a trip to China for the first time with her

mother in 1987. The part that struck me, and that has stayed with me, was that even though she had never been to China before, when she finally visited the homeland of her parents, she felt like she was home. I had the same exact feeling when I took my first trip to Telegraph Creek in 1991. However, what is different from Tan's experience is that I did not have to travel to another country. My maternal grandparents and paternal grandmother were not immigrants; their people and their Ancestors before them had been living in Tahltan and Gitx̱san territories from time immemorial.

In 1992, I was accepted into Simon Fraser University's First Nations Language Teacher Education program and I began to learn my Tahltan language within an academic setting that honoured my culture and my people's ways of knowing. I once again took my grandparents back to Telegraph Creek that summer. Later that year in my Granny and Grandpa's kitchen, Peggy Campbell used the term *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* to describe my experience. In 1994, I completed my Bachelor of Science Degree and professional teaching certificate. I began teaching adult education at a First Nations private post-secondary institute in which I really began to examine and understand what traditional ecological knowledge was and attempted to find ways of accommodating it within the science courses I was teaching. Over the last decade and a half, I have been teaching courses in math, science, and First Nations Studies at Northwest Community College while first completing a Master of Science Degree in Environmental Studies and currently completing my doctoral program in Interdisciplinary Studies at the University of Victoria.

The disconnect between generations. While these stories provide snapshots of my journey to "becoming" a Tahltan, I need to place that in a larger context; that of my

parents' and grandparents' experiences of growing up during the first half of the twentieth century. Their collective experiences have given me answers to why I didn't know I was Tahltan until I was an adult and to why we did not learn our Aboriginal languages or feel proud of being of First Nations descent. In regards to my maternal grandparents, my grandmother's mother was Tahltan and her father was Irish-American. My grandfather's mother was Tahltan and his father was of Scottish and Cherokee descent. In regards to my father's parents, my grandmother's mother was Gitx̱san and her father was Scottish and Irish. My father's father was of Norwegian descent.

Due to the effects of colonization and assimilation, such as the impact of residential schools and the ban on potlatches, there are several generations of Aboriginal peoples who do not know their language or the details of many aspects of their culture. This is also true of Aboriginal peoples who did not attend residential school. Due to the patriarchal system in place in Canada, and because all of the fathers of my grandparents' were considered to be Caucasian (even my maternal grandfather's father whose mother was of Cherokee descent), my maternal grandparents and paternal grandmother were seen to be "white" and therefore did not have to attend residential school. In my maternal grandmother's home, her father did not want her mother teaching their children Tahltan. This was also the case in my paternal grandmother's home. My Tahltan grandmother learned much of her Tahltan language because her mother spoke the language to her and her older sister, but only when their father was away at work. However, the remaining eight children never learned the language fluently. My Gitx̱san grandmother knew her language fluently, but only spoke it with certain individuals.

Why would these men of European descent not want their children to learn their mother's first language? Perhaps because they were brought up in a society that saw English as a superior language, as well as Christian religion and all other aspects of westernized culture as being above all others. Because of this perspective, they probably felt that it was better for their children to be seen as "white" so that they could fit into mainstream Canadian society more seamlessly. Aboriginal languages were not seen to be as "educated" as the English language, so speaking an Aboriginal language was often seen to be inferior and primitive. It was not only the Caucasian fathers who held this opinion; First Nations parents wanted their children to do well in the world and many felt that learning their language might put them at a disadvantage compared to other non-Aboriginal Canadians. This form of colonialism and assimilation was more insidious, but often led to the same result – Aboriginal people not learning about their culture or language and feeling ashamed of being Aboriginal.

If not for government intervention and the insidious nature of colonialism and racism, our people would have continued learning our languages and our Elders would have continued to pass on knowledge and wisdom through our languages. We would have known our worldview and so there would have been no need for us to articulate our ontology (what knowledge is) and epistemology (how we know knowledge) within a western academic framework. But because so many of us were not given the chance to learn about who we are as Aboriginal peoples in our formative years, many of us are using western academia to not only make room for our ways of knowing in the academy, but also to research who we are and to reconnect with our languages, people, land, and Ancestors. This tear or disconnect in the transmission of knowledge and wisdom through

our languages has created the need for so many of us to not only learn what was taken from us, but also to try to mend that tear for future generations by revitalizing our languages. For many Indigenous researchers, we are using research to do just that.

My journey to a Tahltan research framework and Tahltan methodology. My role as an academic researcher began during my Master of Science degree, so, in keeping with my Indigenous contextual approach, I will describe some of my early teachings from Elders, along with my research experiences. For my Master's research (Thompson, 2004), I chose a western methodology that I thought had characteristics and methods in common with the way our people sought and taught knowledge. I chose to use community action research within an Indigenous context as the overarching methodology, with a case study approach as the more specific design. At that time, I felt that it was important for me as a First Nations educator and researcher to ensure that my research was framed within an Indigenous context. For my doctoral research, I wanted to use a different methodology but ensure that I continued to frame my research within an Indigenous context. An important part of my doctoral research journey involved taking a qualitative research methodology course in narrative inquiry. I felt that using narrative inquiry as a methodology could work for my research because I was attempting to locate narrative within an Indigenous perspective. However, I began to feel that something was missing, but I couldn't quite put my finger on what that was. I did know that I not only wanted to hear the stories of the people whom I interviewed, but also wanted to include the transmission of knowledge and wisdom that was happening between myself as a Tahltan student and that of my Tahltan Elders. As an educator, I also wanted to connect children with their Elders in teaching experiences. In regards to how I was approaching

my research, I found that the word “inquiry” just did not encompass all that I was trying to do. While I was seeking knowledge and wisdom about our language and our connection between land and language by asking questions, I was also trying to find myself and place myself in a context with my people. As an educator, I also felt that I should be attempting to find a way to pass this knowledge on to the younger generations.

I thought about using “ethnographic narrative,” a newer methodology combining ethnography and narrative inquiry, or “autoethnography,” which would allow for myself to be part of this process. However, in an Indigenous research paradigm, as the researcher, being part of the process would also be inherent. I was troubled with the thought of using ethnography, a research methodology traditionally used by anthropologists that has not honoured our people in the past (Archibald, 1997; Menzies, 2001). Two of my Elders, Loveman Nole and James Dennis, have spoken about this distrust of researchers. In August of 2001, my grandparents, mother, and I were in Iskut visiting with Loveman and Sarah Nole. Loveman started talking about a young man who had been hired by the band as a researcher. Loveman complained that a Tahltan did not get the job, such as my cousin Tanya Bob or myself. He relayed to me the conversation that he had with this individual, pointing out the mistrust that our people have had with researchers.

Why you guys never got that job,
instead of him?

I said, “I don’t mind if my cousin Judy right here talking to me.

She’s a Tahltan and I’m a Tahltan.

Those things I tell her will stay right here.

But if I tell you that, it will be gone.

Where you go, it will go with you
and we’ll never get nothing back.”

That’s true, you know.

I did it for four people,
I never got nothing back.
(Loveman Nole).

When I was speaking with Oscar Dennis, he told me about how his father, James Dennis, was apprehensive about speaking with me about my study. When Oscar told his father who my grandparents were, Oscar spoke about how that made a difference, knowing that I was Tahltan and related to him.

*Right off the bat,
I mentioned who you are,
and you noticed a change in his face.
Because he is very sensitive about researchers
and about people he doesn't know in general.
He's seen so much exploitation.*
(Oscar Dennis).

In regards to my methodological quandary, things began to fall into place just days after a meeting in November 2006 with my doctoral committee. While I was in Victoria, Patricia Vickers, a Ts'msyen doctoral student at the time (who has now successfully completed her PhD), left me a voicemail message asking to borrow my copy of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2002). The night before I was traveling home, I dreamt that I finally met with her and was able to lend her my copy of Paulo Freire's book. At the Vancouver International Airport early the next morning, I ran into Patricia, who was also waiting to board the flight to Prince Rupert! We agreed to meet later that day, and during our meeting, I told her that I was going to use narrative inquiry as the methodology for my research but that I was struggling with that. It was then that she suggested that I use a "Tahltan methodology." When I heard her speak those words, it felt so right. I didn't know exactly what that was or what that would look like, but I knew that I had to explore that possibility.

Soon after, another incident happened that made it feel like everything was falling into place. Earlier in the year, I heard about SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement), a program whose goal is to increase the numbers of Aboriginal and Indigenous doctoral graduates in British Columbia, as well as in the rest of Canada. Maori scholar Graham Smith, a visiting distinguished professor at the University of British Columbia, started the SAGE program, which is modeled after a similar program that has been very successful in New Zealand. I added my name to the SAGE listserv and sometime in November 2006, an email arrived inviting all SAGE members to attend the dissertation defense of Maggie Kovach, a Cree doctoral student at the University of Victoria. I had taken a graduate course with Maggie in the summer of 2003, so I emailed her to wish her luck on the defense of her dissertation. I heard back from her the day after her defense and we corresponded back and forth, with me asking her many questions about her research, the writing of her dissertation, and how long it took her to complete her doctoral program. I also asked her if I could read her dissertation, *Searching for Arrowheads: An Inquiry Into Approaches to Indigenous Research Using a Tribal Methodology With a Nêhiyaw Kiskêyihitamowin Worldview* (2006). Her research involved interviewing Indigenous scholars about Indigenous methodological approaches, the challenges they faced when using Indigenous methodologies, and how Indigenous knowledges have affected their approaches to research. When I read her dissertation, it felt like the “methodological” clouds had begun to lift! With the gifts that I received from Patricia and Maggie, and after reading more about research from other Indigenous researchers, it became clear to me that I needed to look at research from an Indigenous

paradigm, not just having an Indigenous perspective housed within a western research framework.

From a Western to an Indigenous research paradigm. This shift in research paradigms has become apparent in the literature by Indigenous scholars. For example, Cree scholar Evelyn Steinhauer (2002) writes:

It is exciting to know that finally our voices are being heard and that Indigenous scholars are now talking about and using Indigenous knowledge in their research. I think it is through such dialogue and discussion that Indigenous research methodologies will one day become common practice, for it is time to give voice to and legitimize the knowledge of our people (p. 70).

From reading the research journeys of other Indigenous scholars, there appears to be a continuum that moves between a western research paradigm and an Indigenous research paradigm in regards to research being done for, with and by Indigenous peoples. It is important to point out that this continuum is not temporal – that is, Indigenous researchers do not necessarily start out at one end and move to the other end over time – and that there are Indigenous researchers still carrying out research at all points along this continuum, since there are many western methodologies that are seen to be more in line with the worldview of First Nations peoples. For example, methodologies such as participatory action research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991; Hall, 1993; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988; Park, 1993) or community action research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996; St. Denis, 1992; Stringer, 1996) involve the co-researchers and/or the community in most aspects of the research. These western methodologies arose after years of most western academics not doing collaborative work with the people they have researched. Many

Indigenous scholars have looked to critical and feminist methodologies as a way to carry out relevant and useful research since these strategies of inquiry parallel our journey of wanting voice, wanting change, and wanting to empower our people (Archibald, 1997; Menzies, 2001; Rigney, 1999). In *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes about the importance of Indigenous researchers looking at both critical and feminist approaches to research and she points to Harding's (1987) work and the feminist perspective on research. In her doctoral dissertation, *Coyote Learns to Make a Storybasket: The Place of First Nations Stories in Education*, Stó:lo scholar Jo-ann Archibald writes about her struggle to pick a methodology that she felt would be respectful of First Nations people and be of use to her people. Archibald (1997) states, "I was challenged to bring together a First Nations epistemology and academic research methodology" (p. 14), so she chose to use critical ethnography. Scholars such as Linda Tuhiwahi Smith and Jo-ann Archibald have paved the way for Indigenous researchers to feel free to broaden the horizons of research to devise methodologies that come from our worldview.

It is important to highlight the different ways in which research can be embarked upon that can be transformative for, and make a positive difference in, the lives of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous scholars have pushed the boundaries of research in the academy in order to give our people the opportunity to choose a research methodology along that continuum that is respectful and useful. In the past, most research that involved Indigenous people was carried out by non-Aboriginal academics. This began to change once Indigenous people began to enter the academy. Indigenous researchers were now doing research but were using western methodologies and the tools of the academy,

the only “tools” available to them at that time. A shift in that continuum has had Indigenous researchers using western methodologies, such as grounded theory, narrative inquiry, and phenomenology, but they are often framing them within Indigenous perspectives (Smith, 1999).

Shifts in this continuum, from western methodologies to Indigenous methodologies, have been necessary in order for us to be part of the research process in a way that respects who we are and our ways of knowing. However, Anishinaabe researcher Kathy Absolon talks about this continuum and how, in the end, no matter how western methodologies seem to support our Indigenous methodologies, they do not come from our worldviews.

I believe that if we look at some of the methodologies along the continuum that are less oppressive, they might be supportive of Indigenous methodologies or they might even be in alliance with Indigenous methodologies, but they are still not Indigenous methodologies. They happen to come from their paradigm, and their reference point and while they might fit they are not based in Indigenous thinking. They are not based in spirit and where spirit comes from (as cited in Kovach, 2004, p. 129).

Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2001) has stated how important it is to move from an Indigenous research perspective, which is couched in a western paradigm, to an Indigenous paradigm because of fundamental differences in ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Instead of looking for a methodology from a western research perspective that seems to fit into an Indigenous perspective (such as participatory action research, community action research, critical ethnography,

phenomenology, or narrative inquiry), or examining what Aboriginal cultural protocols are in regards to research, and then trying to match that up with a western academic methodology, I needed to look at my people's worldview, cultural protocols, language, relationships, and then name that methodology.

...And then to Tahltan Voiceability. Coming up with a Tahltan methodology began with my Master of Science thesis (Thompson, 2004), which was based on my work with the Gitga'at community of Hartley Bay that made connections between Ts'msyen children and their Elders through a research project on traditional plant knowledge. This project helped me to refine my understanding of my role as a First Nations educator and shaped my early learning experiences as a researcher. For my doctoral research, I wanted to ensure that I carried out research that encompassed my duties and responsibilities as a teacher and a student, as well as being honourable, useful and transformative for my people.

From an Aboriginal perspective, research involves learning, participating, sharing, and using the knowledge and wisdom that is learned for the betterment and empowerment of a community (Nabigon et al., 1999). The intergenerational transmission of knowledge and wisdom can also be considered to be a part of Aboriginal research, as are the relationships that Aboriginal people have with their own people, other people, and the environment. "An Indigenous paradigm comes from the fundamental belief that knowledge is relational" (Wilson, 2001, p. 176).

While Indigenous peoples share similar worldviews, each Indigenous group or Nation is unique in its own ways, so it is important to set Indigenous research paradigms within specific cultures and/or Nations. In her dissertation, *Searching for Arrowheads:*

An Inquiry Into Approaches to Indigenous Research Using a Tribal Methodology With a Nêhiyâw Kiskêyihitamowin Worldview, Cree scholar Maggie Kovach (2006) interviewed Maori scholar Graham Smith about emerging Indigenous research paradigms. He states:

I have been trying to encourage various indigenous Canadians to develop indigenous theorizing that is particular and located in their own landscapes. In other words, to develop the confidence [to] put their own tribal nuances around it. That is, to begin to name our own world in our own cultural terms (as cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 160).

This is what I have tried to do when coming up with a Tahltan methodology. Wilson (2008) has defined methodology as a process that guides the research journey to its final destination. When looking for a way to guide my research, I knew that it had to come from the worldview that I have named – *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* – as well as my experiences as a Tahltan learner, educator, and researcher. I have been learning about Tahltan ways of knowing for over two decades. As a Tahltan student, I have been employing different methods in order to learn my Tahltan culture and language in a respectful way. Asking questions and inquiring about our ways of knowing is just a small part of that. I have been listening and observing during times when my Elders have been meeting formally, such as at feasts, music festivals, or at council meetings, or informally, which mainly involves bringing my grandparents back home or to communities where friends or relatives live, so that they can visit. I see my role in facilitating these visits between Tahltan Elders as an offering, a gift, to my Elders as a way to show my respect and gratitude for their teachings. I have also been learning songs, learning how to dance, participating in feasts. I have been involved as a teacher in

Tahltan science camps and have helped to organize school fieldtrips out on our land. These observational, social, and relationship skills are important ways of showing respect to my teachers. They have been valuable educational tools and also play a key role in carrying out research in a respectful way.

A Tahltan methodology would involve our people at all stages, it would be respectful, it would involve the teachings of our Ancestors and Elders, and it would involve giving a voice to our Ancestors and our land (Kenny 2000) and language. In my research, I am seeking a Tahltan voice, a voice that would not only allow for the transmission of cultural knowledge and wisdom between generations, but that would also help our people to adapt to complex changes in our social, environmental and educational worlds. My Tahltan methodology – Tahltan Voiceability – honours my Ancestors, my people, and our connection to our land and language, as well as honouring, respecting, and raising up our voices. It provided a way for the voices of my people to guide me on my research journey to carry out honourable, useful, and transformative research – all part of an Indigenous research process.

Naming of the Dissertation

I put a lot of thought into the naming of this dissertation – *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* – “Our Ancestors Are In Us”: Strengthening Our Voices Through Language Revitalization From a Tahltan Worldview – to honour not only the co-researchers of my study, but also my Elders and Ancestors. The guiding phrase for my research journey – *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* – means “Our Ancestors Are In Us.” Tahltan Elder Peggy Campbell used the phrase *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* to describe how I felt upon my first trip to my people’s territory – a sense of belonging in the homeland of my Ancestors.

Peggy has told me that the meaning is, “our Ancestors are in us,” or more literally, “their roots are from that Tahltan village” (literally: *keyeh* – village; *hedekeyeh* – their village; *hots’ih* – from; *kāhidi* – roots.)

I have used *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi* to name a Tahltan worldview that explains how my people are connected to our territory – that our roots are tied to that territory, and that we have a strong connection to our Ancestors. From Peggy’s explanation, I see *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi* as a way to describe the relationship a person has with their traditional territory, their people, their language, and their culture. Language and land are interconnected – language is a connection to the land through our Ancestors. Our Ancestors have named our land – landmarks, landforms, mountains, rivers, lakes, specific territories – in our language. Through our language, we can hear the voices of our Ancestors and their teachings about our culture and our relationship with the land. By revitalizing our language, we can get that much closer to the teachings of our Ancestors, and that much closer to both strengthening and healing our people.

In regards to “Strengthening our Voices through Language Revitalization from a Tahltan Worldview,” I see my doctoral work as an example in which co-researchers have directed the scope of the research, thereby guiding me with their strong voices. Originally, I had come up with research questions based on what I had been learning from my people regarding Tahltan cultural knowledge, but as my research progressed and the voices of the co-researchers became louder and louder, including my own, it became more focused on the revitalization of our Tahltan language. Although David Rattray was the only co-researcher who explicitly stated the relationship between language revitalization and healing, all of the co-researchers mentioned, in one way or another, the

legacy of colonization and assimilation policies, how they have detrimentally affected our people in regards to our language, and the need to revitalize our language so that we can become a prouder, stronger nation. David has stated that we cannot revitalize our language until we have healed our people. I propose that the two need to be carried out simultaneously and I hope that “Strengthening Our Voices Through Language Revitalization,” captures that assertion.

Presentation of Voices

It is important to set the stage for the ways in which I have presented the voices in my dissertation; from the voices of my co-researchers, the voices of my teachers (Tahltan Elders and Ancestors), my voice, and the voices of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars. I took the advice of Aboriginal researchers Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett (2005) to heart: “We encourage Indigenous writers to develop and utilize styles of writing such as narrative, self-location, subjective text, poetry, and storytelling that better reflect Aboriginal realities than do academic prose” (p. 121). I chose to use narrative, story, poetry, and poetic transcriptions to give a richer and more diverse representation of the essence of the different voices, the emotions expressed, and the rhythm and cadence of the spoken voice.

In terms of my giving meaning to what others have said, I have found it a daunting task to paraphrase the words of my teachers and co-researchers, as well as both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars, in my dissertation. I often feel that I cannot do justice to what they have said by using my own words. I see the words of those who I have learned from as part of their story, a part of their journey. It is hard to honour the teachings and learnings of my Ancestors, Elders, co-researchers, and other scholars if I

try to distill or shorten their words. Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline (2000) sums it up best in her poetic narrative regarding her Indigenous research methodology, “Circle as Methodology”:

Rule Three: BREVITY

I am told: “This quote is too long
has too much text in it.

Break it up.

Comment on the content.

Theorize: What do You think They mean?”

Create Bridges it is called.

I am stunned.

In Circle Talk

when a speaker has the Stone

She or he talks as long as they want.

Making their Own connections

between Self and others in Circle

Self and topic

Self and Communities.

My task is to Shrink stories.

Cut huge chunks of now named “extraneous” material.

As I struggle to Insert my own comments

Intruding into Other’s stories

I become self-consciously Aware.

Editing: a polite code word

for Actions viewed Disrespectful

Unacceptable

in Traditional Circles.

(pp. 367-368).

By the same token, I do not want to dishonour them by not expressing what I have learned from them. Perhaps by giving meaning to their words from my perspective, I am giving voice to those I have learned from in a different form. What I will do for the rest of this dissertation is to give voice to all who I have learned from, in their own words or by using poetic transcriptions. However, I will also, when appropriate, give my understanding and the meaning that I make from their words, their story. Hopefully this

will be both respectful to the voices in my dissertation, while also giving voice to my interpretation of what I have learned.

Terminology

In keeping with an Indigenous research paradigm, I have tried to use terminology that is more in keeping with research being carried out by an Indigenous researcher to honour, support, and respect my people. I was reminded of the importance to not utilize language that is too “academic” by one of my Elders and co-researchers, Jenny Quock.

Like people that have been to college and university everywhere.

They come up to us and make meeting

and they talk their high language.

We don't know what they're saying.

We don't even know.

'Cause we've never been to college or university and stuff like that.

And some words they use are too powerful for us Elders to listen to.

(Jenny Quock).

Teachers. My teachers are Ancestors and Elders who have been teaching me about who I am as a Tahltan over the last two decades. In regards to this study, I have defined “teachers” as Elders whom I had conversations with but whose teachings did not directly answer the research questions. However, the knowledge and wisdom that they shared with me will be shared with our people in the form of language revitalization curriculum and materials in the future. I have used a different font – *calibri* – to distinguish their words from other written voices.

I have capitalized the titles “Elder” and “Ancestor” as a way to honour and respect my teachers (Campbell, Menzies, & Peacock, 2003). I have also capitalized the terms “Aboriginal” and “Indigenous” for the same reasons that Arapaho scholar Michael Marker (2003) does, in that it “denotes significant historical, cultural, and political

distinctions for the peoples who claim these categories for themselves as a fundamental aspect of their identity” (p. 374).

Teachings. I have used the term “teachings” to name the knowledge and wisdom that has been shared with me by my Ancestors, Elders, and other cultural experts over the years.

Co-researchers. The co-researchers of this study are the Tahltan individuals who have worked most closely with the revitalization of our language. They have helped me in not only answering the research questions, but in changing the research questions to focus more on Tahltan language revitalization. These individuals could also be called “language champions,” which First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council (2010) defines as people who are advocates for their languages and “individuals working to develop teaching resources, archives, documentation, and to teach the language to others” (p. 24). I have italicized the words of the co-researchers in order to distinguish their words more clearly from other quotations and personal communications.

Learnings. I have named the knowledge and wisdom that the co-researchers have shared with me, specific to this study, as “learnings.” I have also used the term “learnings” instead of “data.” In this study, the learnings come from not only the conversations that I have had with co-researchers, but also observations that I have made. As I am also a co-researcher in this study, this fits with the definition of “learnings.”

Review of written and spoken voices. Instead of using the term “literature review,” I have chosen to use “review of written and spoken voices.” The voices that I have both read and heard have guided me both before and throughout this research

journey, and so their voices are also “heard” throughout the dissertation, as opposed to only appearing in one chapter.

Gathering of the learnings. The gathering of the learnings is what I consider to be the tools and techniques, or the methods, which I have utilized in order to answer the research questions.

Presentation of the learnings. I have attempted to present the learnings in such a way as to honour the voices, lessons, and messages of the co-researchers. I have stayed away from using the term “analysis” in that I did not want to appear disrespectful when it came to organizing and reorganizing the words of the co-researchers (Graveline, 2000; Happynook, 2010; Pitawanakwat, 2009). Since the co-researchers were instrumental in helping me come up with the research questions, I have “presented” their learnings using the research questions as a way to organize that section.

Sharing of the learnings. Because I wanted to honour what I have learned, I have used “sharing of the learnings” as opposed to using the term “findings.” In the words of Nuučaanuł researcher Tommy Happynook (2010), “It is my responsibility to be the vessel by which this information is shared; my role in this is to act as cik ci, a speaker of sorts, sharing only what I am told” (p. 37). In keeping with the Tahltan worldview, *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi*, it is crucial that I share what I have learned with my people. I need to balance the need to maintain the context and integrity of the conversations with my co-researchers, while also using my voice to articulate what I have learned as a way to help to revitalize our language.

The Artistry of Research

During the writing of this dissertation, I have been able to see similarities between the carrying out of my research, and the writing up of that research, to that of different artistic endeavours. In 1997, I learned to weave cedar baskets from Ts'msyen weaver William White while I was an instructor at the North Coast Tribal Council Education Centre in Prince Rupert. I have lived my whole life on Ts'msyen territory, save for the years when I was attending university. I was born and raised in *Lax Kxeen* (Prince Rupert) and I have chosen to make it my home as an adult. My connection to the Ts'msyen people and their land became even stronger when I started to learn about who I am as a Tahltan woman. Part of that learning process involved art, both learning about it and learning how to do it.

From William (Willy), I learned not only about cedar bark weaving, but I also learned about the intricacies of Chilkat weaving. I have learned about the warp, the vertical threads, which are made up of wool (originally mountain goat wool) and cedar bark – with the cedar bark providing the strength – and the weft, the horizontal threads, which are made up of different sizes and colours of wool. I have also learned about the importance of tucking in all of the loose threads, which is done every few days, with a Chilkat weaving taking as long as several months to several years to complete. He has also taught me about all of the creative ways in which to connect pieces together seamlessly using dovetail, interlocking, drawstring, or traveling joins. Except for the traveling join, braids cover all of the other joins. Willy has told me that braids define the piece in a tactile way; it is supposed to look and feel like a woodcarving. Braids also outline and define the images.

I have been able to see many similarities between this academic exercise of writing a dissertation and that of Chilkat weaving, such as the different voices that I have presented (the different sizes and colours of weft), the strength in those voices (the cedar bark in the warp), the different ways in which voices have been presented (the defining braids), the constant listening to the voices (tucking in the loose threads), and the finishing off of the dissertation (the joins).

Other researchers have made similar comparisons to the carrying out of research with that of other art forms. In writing “The Dance of Qualitative Design: Metaphor, Methodolatry, and Meaning,” researcher Valerie Janesick (1994) sees qualitative research design as having “an elastic quality, much like the elasticity of the dancer’s spine” (p. 218). When comparing dance to qualitative research, Janesick notes, “Just as dance mirrors and adapts to life, qualitative design is adapted, changed, and redesigned as the study proceeds, because of the social realities of doing research among and with the living” (p. 218). Like Janesick, I have used metaphor to try to explain this process, which Eisner (1991) writes is an effective way of explaining exactly what you mean:

What is ironic is that in the professional socialization of educational researchers, the use of metaphor is regarded as a sign of imperfection; yet, for making public the ineffable, nothing is more precise than the artistic use of language.

Metaphoric precision is the central vehicle for revealing the qualitative aspects of life (p. 227).

Philosopher Philip Wheelwright saw metaphor as “a medium of fuller, riper knowing” (in Deutsch, 1974, p. 84).

Besides seeing and using art as a metaphor for research and dissertation writing, art also connects us to the land, which connects us to our Ancestors. I draw inspiration from my cousin, Dr. Dempsey Bob, a Tahltan-Tlingit master-carver. Dempsey speaks about his connection to the land and our Ancestors in the documentary series, *Landscape as Muse*, in the episode, “Faces in the Land with Dempsey Bob” (Toews, 2008).

I think as an artist,
 you’ve got to be connected to the land.
 ‘Cause the land is spiritual.
 Our people have always been close to nature
 and we learned from the animals
 and we learned from the land.
 Like our Ancestors,
 you know,
 They go back to our land.
 And that’s what I see –
 the faces in the land.
 It’s our Ancestors.
 (Dempsey Bob).

Indigenous educator Carolyn Kenny (1998) also makes this connection between art and land and identity:

As First Nations peoples we experience and define beauty in relation to the way we live. Our relationship to Mother Earth and to each other, the way we live together in a place, our appreciation of holistic aspects of life all coalesce to give a sense of coherence to our worlds. It is our ability to sense this coherence that can give us the confidence to express ourselves fully, define ourselves authentically, and assist us in the creation of our own stories. Through this sense of coherence, we know who we are and we can see the visions of who we might become in the future. This visionary landscape is rich in image, metaphor, symbol. It is punctuated by texture, song, color, story, prose. It is implied in the patterns of a

basket, the shape of a carving, and reflects the lands that we inhabit, our experiences on it, and the knowledge that we acquire because of our respect for place. This is our sense of art as First Peoples (p. 77).

Dempsey has stated, both to me in person and in this video, how art can strengthen and heal our people, which is something that the co-researchers have also attributed to language. In Rod McCormick's (1994) study on Indigenous healing, artistic expression – such as song, dance, and carving – was seen to be the most important factor in the healing of Indigenous people.

I can see parallels between art and language in my life, as both have played key roles in my learning of who I am as both a First Nations and a Tahltan person. I have been trying to learn the Tahltan language ever since I first travelled to our territory. At the same time, I have also been learning about First Nations art, but especially the art of my people and the art of the Ts'msyen people.

*In learning who I am
as a First Nations person
and more specifically,
a Tahltan woman,
art has played a key role in my discovery.
I have learned much
from the work of Aboriginal artists.
From carving, weaving, and beading,
drum making, and sewing.
To stories and narratives,
poetry and songs.
When creating art myself,
whether with my hands
or with my words,
I find that the creative process
allows teachings
to move through me.
I feel more connected to my people,
our land,
and our language.*

(Edōsdi, November 2011)

Indigenous educator Carolyn Kenny (1998) writes about the connection between art and identity:

In our poems, our art, our dance, we reveal ourselves to one another and to society at large.... This revelation helps us to define ourselves individually and collectively and therefore has many important healing aspects. We build community. We share our hopes and dreams. We participate in the creative spirit. We create identities. We participate in the creation of our destiny as individuals and as communities (p. 79).

From the moment that I began asking questions about my people, our land and our language, art has been there to help me learn. Because of this, I have chosen to organize my dissertation around certain pieces of art. These forms of art, each unique in their own way, hold meaning for me as I continue to make this journey of discovery. Cree researcher Michael Hart speaks about using the “physical manifestations of sacred experiences” (as cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 141) in his methodology. In his discussion on Indigenous research methodology with Cree scholar Maggie Kovach, Hart states,

It seems to me that tools are significant. These tools include our pipes, our songs, our rattles, and our sacred items that we care about, including plant and animal medicines. These items are catalysts in our process. While by themselves, they may mean very little. But, these items have arisen through at least one of several processes. These processes including dreams of the items before they arrive, the interpretation of the dreams of these items, the acceptance of these items as catalysts, and the passing of these items from one person to another.... They are

physical manifestations of sacred experiences. So when I prepared for my research for my PhD, my methodology includes the use of these items, particularly a pipe and songs (as cited in Kovach, 2006, pp. 140-141).

I will be using physical manifestations of my learning experiences, namely my button blanket, my grandfather's mittens, a dream song, and my drum, as symbols to represent markers along my journey of coming to know myself as a Tahltan. Along with each piece, there are people who have contributed to my learnings along the way. In terms of identity development, psychologist Peter T. F. Raggatt (2006) refers to objects, events, and people as icons or landmarks onto which individuals attach meaning, which are accompanied by a new voice and story. Psychologist Dan McAdams (1993) simply states, "identity is a life story" (p. 5). Over the last twenty years that I have been making this Tahltan journey, I see the journey, and the physical manifestations of this journey, as giving me a new voice, a strong voice, to tell my story and the stories of my people. I hope that this translates well to my research.

The Framework For My Dissertation

While I have chosen specific art pieces that I identify as "landmarks" or physical manifestations in my Tahltan journey, I also want to focus on the artistic process that connects most of them, how they are all related in some way, and how this ties my dissertation together.

Strength and Stability

*When sewing buttons on a button blanket,
threads are intertwined between fabric and button,
and then back through fabric again,
to give it strength and stability.*

*Beading,
like sewing buttons on a button blanket,*

*involves the process of securing each bead
to the chosen fabric.
Moving the thread through the moose hide,
then through the beads,
and then back through the hide again
in order to give it strength and stability.
When weaving,
whether it's a Chilkat headdress or a cedar basket,
the intertwining of threads and/or cedar,
provides strength and stability.
Making a drum,
when stretching the wet hide over the wooden frame,
it must be secured by sinew.
The intertwining or weaving
of the sinew in and out of the back of the drum
provides strength and stability.
All of these artistic processes
involve the intertwining of materials
to provide strength and stability,
much like the voices in my dissertation.
(Edōsdi, December 2011).*

I extend this metaphor to my dissertation and the way in which I have intertwined my voice, the voices of the co-researchers, voices of my Tahltan teachers (Ancestors, Elders, and cultural experts), voices of other Aboriginal teachers, and the voices of other scholars and academics, both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, with all of these voices providing strength and stability to my dissertation.

In the way that I have structured my dissertation, I am using specific pieces of art to represent not only “landmarks” or “icons” or “physical manifestations” of my Tahltan journey, but also the way in which I see each section as its own story. As well, the “literature review” and the “data” have been intertwined and interwoven together since I have not been able to, nor did I want to, separate the different voices that have guided me and taught me along the way.

Literature references should reflect the emergent process and the thesis that comes from conducting action research. Literature should be woven through the developing arguments and interpretations. Reading can inform different stages of the research process and the reflection, insight, application process then provides the framework for structuring the thesis in the same way that this cycle informed participants to solve problems (Phelps in Four Arrows, 2008, p. 232).

As my research questions changed, I had to do more research of the literature, and I want this reflected in my dissertation. In my Master's thesis, I called my second chapter, "Review of the Discourse – Written and Spoken Texts" as opposed to "literature review" as "I felt that it is important to examine and consider the words of all experts, whether that entails the written words of scholars/academics or the spoken voices of First Nations Elders and other cultural experts" (Thompson, 2004, p. 16). For my doctoral research, I am now calling the literature review "review of written and spoken voices." Previous to the start of my doctoral research, I was informed by Tahltan Elders and Tahltan cultural experts by their spoken voices, and by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars with their written words. In terms of this specific study, I see what I have learned from the co-researchers as being just as valuable as the other voices, spoken or written, and I did not want to exclude them. Therefore, for that reason, data or "learnings" from the co-researchers can also be seen as part of "review of written and spoken voices."

In each section of my dissertation, when I am sharing the different voices, I will start with Tahltan voices, followed by Aboriginal voices, and then non-Aboriginal voices, where applicable. As mentioned above, in each section, "review of written and spoken

voices” will be present. As well, the learnings – which include both the co-researchers’ voices and my observations – can also be found throughout the dissertation. In Table 1, I list the sections in my dissertation.

Table 1. Sections in my Dissertation

<i>Esladindi</i> : “Give me your hand” – Welcome and introduction to the dissertation
<i>Kākha’ū ts’ede ededaga asla</i> : “I made a button blanket for myself” – Introduction of my people, our land, our language
<i>Kishegwet ejinh esghani’ān</i> : “Rosie Dennis gave me a song” – A Tahltan research framework from a Tahltan worldview
<i>Estsiye mebade esghani’ān</i> : “My grandfather gave me his mittens” – Presentation of the learnings
<i>Esdidene Daga Hosjinh</i> : I Will Sing the Song For My People – Sharing the learnings
Coming back full circle to <i>kākha’ū ts’ede ededaga asla</i>
(Review of written and spoken voices – found in all sections)

***Esladindi*: “Give me your hand.”** In the opening section, I welcome readers with a Tahltan phrase and give an introduction to the dissertation, which begins with my own narrative of how I have come to know myself as a Tahltan woman in order to be accountable to my people. I then explain how I came to name the dissertation, the different ways that voices are represented, and the connection between research and art. After that, I outline the framework of the dissertation in which I have used phrases in my Tahltan language to connect specific pieces of art to my experiences. For the sections that follow, I will explain how that specific art form has come to represent that section of my dissertation and how it has become a landmark or icon in the narrative of my life as a Tahltan woman.

***Kākha’ū ts’ede ededaga asla*: “I made a button blanket for myself” – Introduction of my people, our land, our language.** The making of my button blanket

represents the beginning of my journey of discovering who I am as a Tahltan woman. As well, with the *Tsesk'iyé* borders and the *Tehkahche* crest design, it indicates what clan I'm from and to what territory I belong. Because of this, I have used it as a way to introduce my people, our land, and our language. I explain our clan system, our family system, how I've come to know my Tahltan Ancestors and Tahltan Elders – my teachers, as well as introducing the co-researchers of this study.

Kishegwet ejinh esghani'ān: “Rosie Dennis gave me a dream song” – A Tahltan methodology from a Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi worldview. In the summer of 2005, Rosie Dennis, one of my Elders, gave me a dream song just ten days before she passed away. In explaining why she chose to give me the song, she told my family:

'Cause I want she –
she be well educated of Tahltan, her.
I hear so much of her, you know.
She can talk Tahltan.
(personal communication, August 2, 2005).

Rosie's father, one of my Ancestors, gave her this song, and he told her to give it to a member of the *Tsesk'iyé* clan. The meaning that I have taken from this is that I am learning who I am as a Tahltan, that I am on the right path, and that my Ancestors are in me – *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*. The gift of the song is like a Tahltan ethics approval, which allowed me to begin the research, guided by the Tahltan worldview that I have articulated, which enabled me to choose a methodology and the ways in which to gather the learnings. In this section, I have outlined the Tahltan methodology that I have created which sets the tone for not only how I carried out my research, but also how I have presented the voices of the people from whom I have received learnings, the co-researchers.

Estsiye mebade esghani'ān: “My grandfather gave me his mittens” –

Presentation of the learnings. I received another cherished gift from one of my Elders, this time my mother’s father. My grandfather gave me his precious mittens, made for him by his mother, who passed away when he was just four years old. These mittens represent the lost chance for my grandfather to be a fluent speaker of Tahltan, but they also represent the love he had for his language, even if he was unable to become a fluent speaker. Because of the passion he had for his language, his mittens also represent my hopes and dreams of helping to revitalize our language. For these reasons, the mittens represent the section where I present the learnings based on the research questions. Specifically, I looked into the connection between language revitalization and healing and how revitalizing our language can give strength to our people. As well, I examined what our people have done to revitalize our language and what we still need to do in order to save it from extinction.

Esdidene daga hosjinh: “I will sing a song for my people” – Sharing of the

learnings. When Elder Rosie Dennis gave me the dream song, she stated,

So I hope everybody enjoy it when she sing it in a party or whatever.
(personal communication, August 2, 2005).

Rosie expects me to share this song, and I need to both share the song, as well as what I have learned from this study. An important principle of the Tahltan worldview, *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*, is the sharing of what you have learned with your people. In this section, I reflect on the learnings, and in particular, applications of the learnings and future research based on the learnings.

Coming back full circle to *kākha'ū ts'ede ededage asla*. In the last part of the dissertation, I return to *Kākha'ū Ts'ede Ededage Asla*, which comes back full circle to

my button blanket. When I first started making my button blanket, I learned that a button blanket is never finished, that there is always more that can be done. My button blanket is a work in progress, and I conclude by drawing parallels between the artistry of button-blanket making and Tahltan language revitalization, work that I have started and will be working on for many years to come.

Rationale

In my conversation with Tahltan language teacher and co-researcher Pauline Hawkins, she spoke about the connection our people have with the land and with our Ancestors, which is connected to a *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* Worldview, “Our Ancestors Are In Us”:

*The land, it's who we are.
When I go out on the mountains
and I'm standing there,
I can just feel the power.
And I can feel the presence of my Ancestors being there
no matter where I go on our land.
I always think,
“My Ancestors walked here; what were they doing?”*
(Pauline Hawkins).

Our land is intrinsically tied to our Tahltan language, and from that stems our culture and worldview, and the relationships that we have with each other and all the beings with whom we share our land. Pauline then went on to eloquently make the connection between language and who we are as a people:

*If we don't know our language,
then who are we?
You know,
our language is so much a part of who we are.
And if we can't speak our language,
then how can we be Tahltan?*
(Pauline Hawkins).

In 1972, the National Indian Brotherhood made a statement regarding the relationship between language and identity, that is still relevant today:

Language is the outward expression of an accumulation of learning and experience shared by a group of people over centuries of development. It is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force, which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life. Knowing his maternal language helps a man to know himself; being proud of his language helps a man to be proud of himself (National Indian Brotherhood, 1972, pp. 14-15).

Maori scholar Linda Tuiwahi Smith (2000) claims that language is “a window onto ways of knowing the world” and is also “a way of interacting in the world (p. 237).” In regards to the Mi’kmaw language, Aboriginal scholars Marie Battiste and James Youngblood Henderson (2000) state:

...the Mi’kmaw language is more than just a knowledge base, it is essential for the survival of the Mi’kmaq. It reflects the Mi’kmaw philosophy of how we shall live with one another, how we shall treat each other, and how the world fits together (p. 50).

As a Tahltan educator, I feel that I need to do all that I can to preserve and revitalize our language. Many Aboriginal languages are in danger of extinction, the Tahltan language being no exception, with only approximately 50 fluent speakers still alive (First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010).

Purpose of Study

My research has focused on the revitalization of my Tahltan language and how this revitalization will positively affect the lives of my people. In that an Indigenous research paradigm should be both relational and accountable, I have made sure that on every step of this research journey I ask myself, and keep asking myself, the following questions, “Why am I doing this research?” and “Who is it for?” As long as I can answer, “For my people” to both questions, then I know that I am on the right track. Educator Denise Purnell wrote a poem entitled, “Whose Dissertation is it Anyway?” which speaks to doing research for the “greater good”:

Do I forfeit my nagging desires?
 or conspire
 to act on my intuition
 and bring to fruition
 what I think the dissertation should be?
 I'll take a stand and do the dissertation I want to do
 Not for me or for you,
 But for them!
 It may not be immediately understood
 This dissertation is for the greater good!
 (Purnell in Four Arrows, 2008, p. 222-223).

At a more global level, another purpose of my research deals with decolonizing research paradigms, which, in the eloquent words of Cree scholar Maggie Kovach (2006), “seeks to push at the edges of the ideological certitude of what counts as knowledge in the academy” (p. 4).

A Journey to the Research Questions.

What began as a journey to document, preserve, learn, and pass on Tahltan cultural knowledge and wisdom became a quest to revitalize the Tahltan language. Guided by the voices of my co-researchers, my original research questions went through

several incarnations before they became focused specifically on Tahltan language revitalization. My original research questions focused more on Tahltan cultural knowledge:

1. Within the context of several Tahltan community-learning experiences, how is Tahltan cultural knowledge being acquired, adapted and transmitted?
2. What are the perceptions of key informants and consultants regarding the role and importance of the Tahltan language in the maintenance and renewal of Tahltan cultural knowledge?
3. What educational methods are being used to assist with the acquisition, adaptation and transmission of cultural knowledge?

However, after conversations with several of the co-researchers, it became clear that I had to refine my research questions to focus more on Tahltan language revitalization. Potts and Brown (2005) have stated,

By listening to co-researchers, we begin to interpret the data, refine our research question, and rethink our design.... Through paying attention and listening, research is reconceptualized and becomes an emergent, unfolding process rather than a trip to a predetermined destination. This responsive and attentive way of doing research involves being open to shifts and shape changes in the research design, including the topic and the question(s) (p. 272).

This is consistent with the Tahltan worldview, and more specifically, the Tahltan methodology that I have outlined.

My updated research questions became:

1. Within the context of several Tahltan community-learning experiences, how is Tahltan cultural knowledge, **but more specifically, the Tahltan language**, being acquired, adapted and transmitted?
2. What are the perceptions of key informants and consultants regarding the role and importance of the Tahltan language in the maintenance and renewal of Tahltan cultural knowledge?
3. What educational methods are being used to assist with the acquisition, adaptation and transmission of cultural knowledge, **but more specifically, the Tahltan language?**

As I continued to meet and speak with more co-researchers and as I re-read the words of Indigenous academics regarding the connection of Indigenous languages to culture, land, and the Ancestors, I realized that I needed to hone in specifically on Tahltan language revitalization. “Our Aboriginal languages and culture contain the accumulated knowledge of our ancestors...” (Ermine, 1999, p. 104). My Ancestors and Elders inspired me to write the following revised research questions:

1. How can Tahltan language revitalization positively affect the lives of my people?
2. In the past and present, what has been done to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language?
3. In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language?

While the research questions that I had originally penned had been too broad and all encompassing, I had also been too ambitious with my original research plan. I had hoped to develop CDs, DVDs, and other multimedia that focused on Elders’ knowledge and

wisdom through stories and language. While a lot of the stories and other cultural/traditional knowledge and wisdom that was shared with me will not appear in this dissertation, it will still be shared with our people through multimedia and curriculum/learning materials in the near future. Much of what I learned from Elders, fluent speakers, and educators, such as stories, songs and names, will be used as examples of cultural knowledge and wisdom that need to be part of the development of curriculum and other language materials to promote Tahltan language revitalization.

KĀKHA'Ū TS'EDE EDEDAGE ASLA: "I Made a Button Blanket for Myself"

– Introduction of My People, Our Land, Our Language



Figure 4. My Button Blanket

The Tahltan phrase, *Kākha'ū ts'ede ededage asla*, translates as, “I made a button blanket for myself.” My artistic learning journey began when I travelled to our territory for the first time with my grandparents in 1991. When I graduated from Simon Fraser University’s Professional Development Program in 1993, I wore the button blanket of Margaret Bob, Dempsey Bob’s wife. My grandparents wanted me to have my own button blanket so they bought me red and royal blue melton cloth and I began to make a button blanket, with the guidance of several artists. My first teacher was Dempsey Bob. He imparted the importance of having a story for your button blanket. I was still learning who I was so I wasn’t too sure what he meant, but I took his words to heart and thought long and hard about them. In “Robes of Power: Totem Poles on Cloth,” (Jensen and Sargent, 1986) Dempsey stated the following about the importance of button blankets:

Our people say, when we wear our blankets, we show our face. We show who we are and where we come from. When we dance, we share part of our history with our people. It's more than just what you see when you look at a blanket.

To us, it has so much meaning. The blankets become very personal (p. 6).

I recall laying out the fabric on Dempsey and Margaret's kitchen floor and cutting out the borders for the button blanket, with Dempsey instructing me, and my grandparents keeping a watchful eye. I then began a full-time teaching position and was unable to complete the blanket at that time. However, the school that I was teaching at was a private post-secondary First Nations institution and I had the opportunity, along with my students, to not only draw the design for my button blanket, but to also have assistance in transferring the pattern to cloth, cutting out the design, and sewing it on.

In 1997, when it came time to design the blanket and sew it together, I reached out for guidance to fellow Tahltan David Rattray, who was the principal at the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek at the time. David told me that either a person of the opposite clan should make your button blanket or an Elder of the opposite clan who is related to you should bless it or give a speech about it. Either of these two acts acknowledges you as being Tahltan. There were several rituals that he stated that needed to be abided by, such as: never let the blanket touch the ground, the whole blanket should be sewn by hand, and that you should never sew when you are mad, or you will sew bad feelings into the blanket. The one thing that he taught me that has always stuck with me is that a button blanket is never finished.

I also spoke with the principal of the Hartley Bay School, Ernie Hill, who is a Ts'msyen hereditary chief of the Eagle clan. Ernie faxed me two sheets of paper with

knowledge and wisdom about the making of a Ts'msyen button blanket, which he learned from his mother, Marjorie Hill. My cousin, carver Dale Campbell, daughter of Harry and Peggy Campbell, helped me design the *Tsesk'iyē* (Crow) borders and *Tehkahche* (Frog) crest on the back of the blanket. When it came to sewing the designs on the blanket, Margaret Atkins of the Haida Nation taught me how to do that. With the assistance of my mother, grandmother, and grandaunt, we sewed all of the designs and buttons on by hand.

In making my button blanket, even though a member of the opposite clan, the *Ch'iyōne* (Wolf) Clan did not make it for me, I received assistance from three Tahltans who are *Ch'iyōne*, namely Dempsey Bob, Dale Campbell, and David Rattray. Because of their assistance and teachings, I am hoping that this has provided the proper acknowledgement that I am Tahltan.

My People

In Vera Asp's 2004 Master's thesis entitled, *Traditional First Nations education and socio-cultural theory: Vygotsky's contribution – Singing a song to honour my mother*, my dear friend wrote this about our people:

My ancestors are (are because Tahltans are of the worldview that our ancestors continue to "live" in those of us in today's world) proud, self-sufficient, and culturally enriched. It is my great privilege to be a descendent of them (Asp, 2004, p. 1).

I wholeheartedly agree with Vera and I am equally as proud to be Tahltan. Vera's assertion that our Ancestors continue to live in us today lends credence to the Tahltan

worldview, *Hedekeyeh Hots 'ih Kāhidi*, which explains how my people are connected to our land, our language, and our Ancestors.

There are approximately 5000 members of the Tahltan Nation and Iskut Nation (Tahltan Central Council, 2010c), with many more who are of Tahltan ancestry but do not have “Indian Status.” Tahltan people live in the three Tahltan communities of Telegraph Creek, Iskut, and Dease Lake, as well as in cities and towns in British Columbia, the Yukon, the rest of Canada, and around the world.

Didene is a Tahltan word that was used to refer to our people, and *Didenekeh* for our language. My grandpa would say that *Didene* meant that you were a “Tahltan Indian.” However, since the arrival of the Europeans back in the mid to late 1800s, “Tahltan” is the term that has been used to refer to our people and our language (Emmons, 1911; Teit, 1956). Eva Carlick was a fluent speaker in Tahltan and Tlingit, as well as English. Back in the late 1970s, Robert Adlam (1985) interviewed her for his doctoral research, “The Structural Basis of Tahltan Indian Society” and Eva explained to Adlam what the word Tahltan meant to her:

Long time ago they put bark, white ones, they put'em in the water just like 'ta'. 'Ta' means 'tin'. They make dishpan. You put'em in the water; you could see anything. And fish coming up, you see in that white stuff on top. You could see that fish. ...that's bark...they put big rocks on...so it wouldn't float away, see,...When that fish coming on top that white they catch'em – gaff. That's why they call'em...Tahltan (as cited in Adlam, 1985, p. 21).

Between 1912 and 1915, ethnographer James Teit interviewed Dandy Jim, who was fluent in Tahltan, Tlingit and English. In trying to explain the name Tahltan for our

Nation, Teit (1956) interviewed several people, although in this section of his notes, he only references Dandy Jim.

In a tribal or collective sense the Tahltan call themselves titcaxhanotēn 'people of titcaxhan.' They claim titcax.han is the name of an ancient seat or headquarters of the tribe close to the mouth of Tahltan River, viz., the little flat where the present salmon houses are on the East side of the government bridge crossing the Tahltan River. The meaning of the name is said to be 'salmon ascending the creek,' or to be connected with the ascent of salmon up the Tahltan River at this place, which was formerly a great salmon fishing place of the tribe and a central rendezvous and trading place. According to several informants this place was at one time the chief headquarters of the tribe and the original tribal seat.

The name Tahltan by which the tribe is now (altogether) known to the Whites is claimed to be of Tlingit origin. Taltankwan was formerly a common general term used by the Taku and Wrangel Tlingit for the tribe. It is really a Tlingit name for the low flat on the West side of the mouth of Tahltan River just opposite titcaxhan. Dandy Jim, who speaks Tlingit fluently, derives the term from Tlingit tał 'pan,' 'bowl' or something pan-shaped, and tan having the sense of permanency 'remain,' 'be,' 'is,' etc., the place being so named by the Tlingit because of the deep basin-shaped hollow there. This flat was a great camping ground formerly in the fishing and trading seasons and the furthest east or most interior point /to which/ the Tlingit of Wrangel came to trade (with canoes.) The

Tahltan River also gets its name from this flat. The Tahltan name of the River is tū.tzEdle meaning ‘small creek’ or ‘small water’ (pp. 47-48).

Different First Nations groups called our people by different names, with one such name being “Nahani.” According to Teit (1956), this means “people of that place” or “people from over there” (p. 48).

The Tahltans recognize themselves as Nahani because / they are / so called by Indians living east of them. It seems this term was adopted by the fur traders, and as a designation for the tribe / the use of this term by / the Whites precedes the term Tahltan. As the fur traders first entered the Tahltan country from the east they naturally adopted the designation used for the Tahltan by their eastern neighbors. Later, when gold was discovered, followed by an influx of Whites from the West up Stikine River through Tlingit territory, the name Tahltan seems to have come more into vogue and in time became practically the only designation for the tribe used by the Whites (Teit, 1956, p. 48).

By the turn of the 20th century, it is clear that our people accepted the name of Tahltan for ourselves, with that designation being used in the “1910 Declaration of the Tahltan Tribe” (see Appendix A).

Tahltan clan system. Back in 1992, I was honoured to begin learning about our clan system from Aunty Eva Callbreath, my grandfather’s sister-in-law. She allowed me to audiotape her teaching me this valuable knowledge and wisdom and I have included a few different versions of the same narrative. I had thought to pull them together into one narrative, but did not feel that I was honouring the voice of one of our most valuable Elders – and now Ancestor – by doing that. I decided to leave them the way I heard them

in order to give a loud voice to one of my first Tahltan teachers. In her teachings, Aunty Eva explains about the two Tahltan clans, Crow and Wolf, and how they came to be. The Tahltans follow a matrilineal system in which people are born into the clan of their mother.

See, there's three different groups on Crow side,
 four different groups on the Wolf side.
 There's three different groups of Tahltan, I mean, uh, Crow Clan.
 So they must be, I presume,
 they're real Tahltan Indians.
 So they belong to the group they call *Tlabānotine*,
 that's how Klappan got the name.
 See, the Indian name is *Tlabāno*,
 so your mother belong to that group
 and your grandpa belong to *Nālotine*.
 That's north, that's the group that Felix [Jackson] and them belong to.
 The third group is *Ahitigotine*.

See, but the Wolf Clan came from different countries.
 There's a story about them,
 each group started from different countries.
 They, I don't know how true this story is,
 but they said this woman walked in from well down the Tahltan River.
 Entered Tahltan,
 and in the meantime,
 another one entered Tahltan from the East I guess,
 and they called this one from the east,
Togotine, that means prairie, you know, she came from the prairie.
 And the other one they call *Tagishwān*.
 Now, they said *Tagishwān* people must have come down from the Arctic,
 nobody seemed to know,
 I don't know where they come from.
 Now, that's the group I belong to.
 And another one came up the river.
 This story could be true,
 she's the one that had her slave
 and the Tahltan Indians kidnapped her.
 And the following year her mother and dad came back again
 and the slave found out at Tahltan.
 And her mother and dad and father-in-law had a fishtrap there.
 And so the slave told her to come back to her mother.

She wouldn't do it.
 She already fell in love, I guess.
 So the Tahltan Indians told the slave,
 "Go back and tell your friends that we want to make friends with them."
 "Tell them to come up to Tahltan."
 So the slave did.
 She went back she said,
 "They want you all up there."
 so they came up and made friends, with the Tahltans.
 And it happened they belonged to this,
 they were called Wolf clan and what they called *Nāngā'ay* clan.
 And so that's how the *Nāngā'ay* got started in Tahltan.
 And another one entered Tahltan,
 it was a sister to the one they say was came from the prairie.
 She came in and she said,
 "I had a sister, but my sister didn't come in.
 She went the other way and she entered Dease Lake."
 So when she came into Tahltan with her family, they called her *Tālogotine*.
 So there's four different groups, in the Wolf Clan's side.

I just often wonder maybe that was the beginning of the start of this Wolf clan.
 This woman they call her *Tagishwān*.
 They said she walked into Tahltan River
 and the other one came from the Prairies.
 She came out from the other side of the river
 and they brought her over.
 And they met each other and they call each other sisters.
 So they both became Wolf clan.
 And this one that came from the prairies,
 she said she had a sister travelling with her.
 She said, "When we come to this big river that is which the Stikine River,
 she said, "My sister went the other way from me but I followed the Stikine River."
 And year's time they found this girl,
 the other sister got to Dease Lake.
 And when she came into Tahltan she had kids and they call her *Tālogotine*,
 even she was sister to the other one.
 They call her *Tālogotine*, another Wolf clan.

And this fourth one,
 it's about this *Nāngā'ay* family came up and they were fishing for fish.
 They had fish trap up here, five mile.
 And they said that young girl wanted to come cross on this side to pick for berries
 and she disappeared.
 They couldn't find her and she had a slave and they looked for her.

They couldn't find her so they left her.
 Next year, Benny Frank told me about this,
 next year, he said they came back and the slave walked up on the other side of the river.
 This story could have been true, you know.
 But anyway, he walked up on the side of the river.
 Here he spotted Tahltan River and all the smoke houses.
 And he didn't want anybody to see him.
 He stood there, walked around there.
 And he could see people walking around on the bottom.
 So he came back and he told them,
 he told the girl's mother, "Big village up there."
 So they took and brought him around to this side.
 And they told him to sneak down to the river as close as he could get to the people
 and just watch for that girl.
 So he did.
 He snuck down,
 this is what Benny Frank told me,
 he snuck down and he hid in the bushes as close as he could get to the hill.
 And here the kids spotted him and they ran back and said,
 "There's a funny man, a hairy man sitting back there."
 He had outfit made out of groundhog wool.
 So the people came in,
 went over there and here they spoke to him
 and here he spoke in Tlingit.
 It's the same language as the girl.
 So they called him and he walked over to the fish house.
 Here was this girl with her slave.
 This girl already fell in love with a man.
 This man was her slave, so he told her,
 "You come on back to your mother and dad."
 She wouldn't do it.
 She didn't want to go with him because she was already in love with a boy.
 So the Tahltan Indians told the slave,
 "Go back to your people and tell them that we want to meet them."
 "Tell them we want them to come up here.
 We want to be friends with them."
 So he did.
 He came back and he took everybody up.
 And it happened this woman or this girl that the Tahltans kidnapped
 was *Nānga'ay* girl.
 That's how *Nānga'ay* family started up here.
 This is what Benny told me.

See, there's two groups there are no more,

like the *Nānga'ay*,
 when they came up the river, they all died off.
 There's no more *Nānga'ay*,
 and the one that entered Dease Lake they call *Tālogotine*,
 there's no more *Tālogotine*.
 So it's just my group, *Tagishwān*,
 and *Togatine*, that's the prairie.
 (personal communication, June 29, 1992).

Tahltan family system. The Tahltan Central Council has come up with a family system, which represents our people at central council. In the last decade a system was voted on and the following family names were designated to represent every member of the Tahltan Nation: Quock, Carlick, Shoe-kawk/Howd-a-gette, Thud ga, Good-za-ma, Stikine Claw and Thicke, Simgaldtadta, Cawtoonma, Etzenlee, and Ootheny families.

Tahltan governance. Tahltan people are represented by two bands: the Tahltan Nation, which represents the communities of Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake, and the Iskut Nation, which represents the community of Iskut.

The Tahltan Central Council (2010b) is a body that was formed with the following mandate in mind:

- 1) Self-determination for the Tahltan people;
- 2) Environmental stewardship which includes protecting the land and Tahltan culture;
- 3) Ensuring the people benefit from land and resources; and
- 4) Development of healthy communities

My teachers. For the people I have listed in my dissertation as “teachers” I have used their names to honour what they have taught me. When teaching me, Elders always preface what they are saying and/or doing with who passed on this knowledge and wisdom to them. As a way to honour specific Elders and Ancestors, I would like to

introduce them here by sharing a story and/or a teaching that they have taught me that has brought me to this point in my journey as a Tahltan learner, educator, and researcher. I agree with Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon when she states, “Our teachers are in community” (as cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 129).

Charley and Julia Callbreath. It is hard to think of my grandparents separately. They had been married since 1933 and when my grandpa passed away on October 22, 2010, they had been together for over 77 years. About ten years ago, I was applying for a Canada Council grant, First Peoples Literature: Written and Spoken, and I decided to write a narrative about my grandparents. I am going to include it here, with some updates, as it articulates how I saw our relationship grow over time and what my grandparents mean to me.

*When I think of my grandparents,
memories of my childhood flood my senses.
I can hear my Granny whistling like a bird as she worked in her kitchen.
I can smell the freshly baked bread,
taste the melting butter on that warm bread
– butter always tasted better at Granny’s house!
I can picture their old oil stove,
the wringer washing machine.
The wonderful smell of Granny’s soft cheek when I kissed her hello and goodbye.*

*I can see Grandpa sitting on the edge of their bed
listening to the Canucks’ hockey game on a transistor radio.
Sticks of wrapped juicy fruit gum tucked behind his ear,
in anticipation of the arrival of his grandchildren.
Kissing his cheek and him making a popping sound!
The sound of my grandfather’s beloved country music filling the house
and his stories about the different musicians.
Grandpa’s pictures,
which he loved to bring out to share with family and guests,
especially ones of his mother, father, and him as a handsome young man.*

*My relationship with my grandparents
up until twenty years ago
was one of grandchild/grandparents.*

*I always felt like a little girl around them,
even upon becoming an adult.
When I expressed my desire to learn more about my Tahltan culture,
my grandparents embraced both me and my interest
and began to teach me the language, stories, traditions, and family history.
This was when our relationship deepened and elevated to a new level.*

*I now have new memories;
images of my grandparents' life in Telegraph Creek
through their wonderful storytelling.
I can picture Grandpa as an eight-year old boy being summoned by Elders
to help beat soapberries by hand.
Of course, he had to scrub his whole arm before he was put to work!
My grandmother, who had her first child at eighteen (my mom!),
waiting in anticipation for her children to come home from school
so she could wrestle and play with them.
My grandfather's stories of building roads into Telegraph Creek,
such as "Toad Hill."
My granny's regret of not letting her mother
give her children Tahltan names when they were born.
Picturing granny making rabbit snares out of willow branches as a young girl.
Imagining her drying choke cherries
with her mother in the hot sun on an oil cloth
and then storing them in four-pound jam cans.*

*My grandmother once said to me,
"You have never been ashamed of your grandfather and I.
You love us for who we are."
Granny and Grandpa grew up during a time when being Tahltan,
being "Indian,"
was not something to be proud of.
Granny's father, of Irish and Dutch descent,
did not want his Tahltan wife to teach their children the language.
However, when he was away at work,
Agnes (nee Quock) Vance,
Tsa'tso'ma, would speak Tahltan to her children.
Grandpa's mother, Kitty Tatosa,
Istosta, died when he was only four years old.
Frank Callbreath, of Scottish and Cherokee descent,
hired nurses to look after his children,
and along with the hired hands on his ranch,
his son Charley was able to understand Tahltan.
Although Granny isn't a fluent speaker
and Grandpa wasn't either,
they were able to help each other out
by remembering stories, phrases, words, or names.*

*After being married for so long,
they have been the “keepers” of each other’s memories.*

Grandpa liked to speak Tahltan as often as he could. In regards to the language, Granny has spoken about the need to speak the language to each other in order to teach me. In her words,

Charley and I, you know, when we’re alone,
we have to think about those things for her sake....
That’s how one day he said to me,
he called my name, he said, “*Kāshā, du gow?*”

*Granny recalls sighing and saying,
“Charley do you have to talk Tahltan all the time?”
My grandpa remained silent and didn’t say anything for quite a while.
Finally, with a twinkle in his eye,
he repeated the question with one minor change:
“Ets’ēge, du gow?”
Which translates into English as,
“White woman, what time is it?”*

This story is a prime example of my grandparents’ wonderful relationship and the sense of humour that my grandfather had.

Grandpa passed away on October 22, 2010. Born on Sunday, March 14, 1909, 2:15 a.m., my grandfather was the only Tahltan to have been alive both on the 18th of October 1910, and on the anniversary of the signing of the Declaration 100 years later. This event was to be the final chapter, the grand finale, of the amazing life of one of the most respected Tahltan Elders, one of my greatest teachers, and my most cherished grandfather, *Eyakta’*, Charles Callbreath. My grandfather gave me a gift that he cherished above all else – the mittens that his mother made for him. These mittens represent and signify so much to me and I have named the section dealing with Tahltan language revitalization after my grandfather’s gesture as these mittens represent the future of Tahltan language revitalization to me.

My granny passed away on August 5, 2012, just over a month shy of her 96th birthday. Granny was still well and able when I showed her a printed copy of my dissertation just two weeks before she passed away. She was so happy that she cried tears of joy and said that my grandfather would have been so proud of me.

Eva Callbreath.

Now, she's *Tlabānotine*.
If anybody say *Tlabānotine*,
put your hand up,
you put your hand up!
(personal communication, June 29, 1992).

And with those words directed at me by my Aunty Eva Callbreath, so began my Tahltan journey. Aunty Eva was the widow of Uncle Roy, my Grandpa's oldest brother. When I started to learn about my Tahltan culture, Aunty Eva was one of my first Tahltan teachers, as she was a fluent Tahltan speaker and she was extremely knowledgeable about the Tahltan clan system. On my second trip to Telegraph Creek, Aunty Eva Callbreath taught me so much about who we are as Tahltans. She spoke about the Tahltan clan system – the *Tsesk'iyē* (Crow) and *Ch'iyōne* (Wolf) clans – and about the start of the Tahltan people. I have used her words to explain our clan system, which can be found in the previous section.

Rosie Dennis. Rosie was *Chi'yōne* and her Tahltan name was *Kishegwet*. Her mother and father were Eva and Ned Carlick. Like Aunty Eva Callbreath, Rosie was one of my first Tahltan teachers. She was a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language and she told me many stories, as well as teaching me how to sing and dance. Rosie and my Uncle Fred, granny's youngest brother, were partners for the last two decades of her life. Ten days before she passed away on August 12, 2005, she gave me a dream song, which I

consider to be one of the biggest honours I have received in my life. I see this song as part of my Tahltan journey, and I have used it as an icon, landmark, or physical manifestation for the section in my dissertation entitled, “A Tahltan research framework from a Tahltan worldview.”

Robert Quock. Robert was *Tsesk’iye* and his father was John Callbreath Quock, who was my granny’s mother’s brother. Robert taught me a lot about our people’s relationship with the land. He taught me about plants, about landforms and land structures in our territory, and he taught me about our language. As his wife Jenny said many times, “They call him a Tahltan scientist!” Robert passed away in December 2002.

Jenny Quock. Jenny’s Tahltan name is *Donā’a’* and she is a member of the *Ch’iyōne* Clan. Not only do I consider Jenny to be one of my Tahltan teachers, but she also took part in my doctoral research as a co-researcher. Jenny was married to Robert Quock, my granny’s first cousin.

Francis and Anne Gleason. Francis was a member of the *Tsesk’iye* Clan, the *Nālotine* group, and Stikine-Claw Family. Francis was the oldest son of Henry Gleason and Jean Jamieson (nee Callbreath), my grandfather’s sister. When I visited Telegraph for the first time in 1991, my grandparents and I stayed with Francis and Anne at their home in “downtown” Telegraph Creek. “Downtown” is the part of Telegraph Creek located right by the Stikine River and where the Hudson Bay store (now the River Song Inn) and the RCMP subdivision were located. Their home was originally the “Diamond C” Store, which was started by my grandfather’s father back in 1874, which both serviced the community and outfitted game hunters. Francis was the Tahltan Nation funeral director for many years and kept up the traditions of Tahltan burials and feasts as

best he could from what he learned from his Elders. As a young boy, he spent most of his time on the lower part of the Stikine River, where he learned how to trap and hunt.

Because of his love and vast knowledge of the Stikine River, he started a charter service in 1979. In 1997, he took a group of my students and I down the Stikine River from Telegraph Creek to just past Glenora (12 miles west of Telegraph Creek).

While Francis was not able to speak Tahltan, he could understand it from being married to Anne, a fluent speaker, for over 50 years. Anne was a member of the *Tsesk'iye* Clan and the *Ootheny* Family. She was the daughter of Louise Etzerza and Charlie Inkster. Besides teaching me about the language, Anne also told me about her life growing up on the trapline and about all of the work that she did, such as skinning hides and tanning. Anne taught me that when someone dies, not to cry too much or that person will not be able to get across the Stikine River.

Francis passed away on July 23, 2011, and Anne passed away soon after on November 2, 2011.

Sarah and Loveman Nole. Sarah is *Ch'iyōne* and her Tahltan name is *Tli' Jije*, which means “dog berries.” Loveman is a member of the *Tsesk'iye* Clan. I first met Sarah and Loveman in 1997 when I took my students up to Tahltan territory. Sarah and Loveman were so welcoming and hospitable as well as being wonderful teachers, teaching my students and me all about Tahltan plant knowledge.

Back in the spring of 2000, I was talking with Sarah on the phone and I was telling her how I wanted her to speak only Tahltan to me that summer. I also shared with her my fear of this situation but that I knew that it was the only way to really learn the

language. What she said next to me has affected me in a profound way regarding my desire and need to learn my Tahltan language:

What you got to be scared of –
it's your spirit in you trying to talk!
(personal communication, 2000).

I didn't want Sarah to think that I was ashamed of my language, but that I was scared and worried about making mistakes. After that conversation, I realized that I shouldn't talk about my fear anymore. Although I knew in my heart what she meant about the language being our spirit, I didn't have the words to articulate this. I want my Elders to know that I am proud to be Tahltan and that I truly want the spirit in me to talk openly and freely – for my spirit to have a strong voice.

Henry and Edna Quock. Henry is my Granny's first cousin; his parents were Nelson and Daisy Quock. Henry is *Tsesk'iye* and his Tahltan name is *Kānādel*. Edna is *Ch'iyōne* and her Tahltan name is *Dōsi*. I really got to know Henry and Edna when I was one of the teachers for the Tahltan science camp, which was held at Tahltan village in 2007 and 2008. I visited them several times in the fall of 2008 and every year after that. Henry told me so many stories about growing up at Eight Mile (situated eight miles northeast of Telegraph Creek along the Stikine River), as well as other stories in both English and Tahltan. Henry has such a wonderful sense of humour and we spent many hours laughing during my visits.

Peggy Campbell. Peggy is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan and she is related to my grandfather. Edna Quock is her *edade* (older sister). Peggy's husband, Harry Campbell, who passed away in April of 2010, was the son of my granny's dear cousin,

Una. Because Granny and Aunty Una's mothers were sisters and both *Tsesk'iye*, Aunty Una called granny *dedze* (younger sister) and granny called her *edade* (older sister).

I have learned a lot about the Tahltan language from Peggy, who is a fluent speaker. Peggy would visit my grandparents all the time and they would often speak Tahltan. Peggy would either teach my grandparents words and phrases they either did not know or remind them of words and/or phrases they hadn't heard in a long time. Peggy is the inspiration for the title of my dissertation, *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*.

James Dennis. James's Tahltan name is *Hōk'ābinas* and is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan. He was born and raised on Tahltan territory and is a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language. James is the father of Oscar Dennis and is related to my grandmother.

Dempsey Bob. Dempsey's father, Johnny Bob, and my grandfather were first cousins as their mothers were sisters. Dempsey is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan. He is a master-carver and has been awarded two honorary doctorate degrees, from Athabaska University and Emily Carr University, for his work.

I hope that I have provided a picture of the people whom I call my teachers – the Ancestors, Elders, and other cultural experts who have taught me what it means to be a Tahltan person. I will now introduce the co-researchers of this study; the Tahltan individuals who have helped me answer the research questions dealing with Tahltan language revitalization.

Co-researchers. When I began to seek out co-researchers, my choices were based upon my original research questions, which focused on cultural knowledge, and so I sought out Elders and fluent speakers of the language. As my research plan and process evolved, so did my consideration of who would be potential “co-researchers.” I decided

to focus on the individuals who were able to specifically answer the research questions, and in particular the questions that focused on language revitalization. Patton (1990) calls this process of selecting co-researchers as “purposeful sampling.” This type of sampling is a way of selecting “information-rich cases whose study will illuminate the questions under study” (Patton, 1990, p. 169). I contacted both current and retired language teachers, as well as Tahltan educators. There were a few situations in which the conversations that I had with co-researchers led to contacting other potential co-researchers in regards to their knowledge and/or involvement in the revitalization of our language. While I knew that there were many more people who I could speak with, I knew I had learned enough from the co-researchers I had conversations with to answer the research questions.

Within this group of co-researchers, I felt that I had received enough information, knowledge, and learnings that would help me outline what needs to be done to revitalize our Tahltan language, while knowing that I will continue to work on the revitalization of my Tahltan language after the completion of this dissertation and my doctoral program. While carrying out this research, the conversations I had with Elders who shared stories and other cultural knowledge and wisdom are as important, or more important, in regards to Tahltan language revitalization. What they have taught me will be part of my work on Tahltan language revitalization that will follow this dissertation. In this study, I have identified them as my teachers, and they have joined other Tahltan teachers who I have learned from over the past twenty years. Even though I have made the distinction between “co-researchers” and “teachers,” I have learned much from all of the co-researchers whom I had conversations with and consider them all to be my teachers.

There are more people who are knowledgeable in regards to Tahltan language revitalization, and I hope in the future to work with those whom I was unable to meet with and learn from them. The Tahltan Nation is made up of strong, intellectual, and spiritual individuals who are the heart of the community. I still want to learn from as many Tahltan Elders, fluent speakers, cultural experts, scholars, researchers, teachers, leaders, artists, and activists as possible so that we can work together to revitalize our language.

I have grouped the co-researchers into five categories: Tahltan language teachers, retired Tahltan language teachers, fluent speakers, Tahltan educators, and Tahltan administrators. In this section, I will provide a brief introduction to each of the co-researchers.

Tahltan language teachers. All of the language teachers had insights into what worked, what didn't work, and what needs to be done to promote, preserve, and revitalize our language, particularly in the school system.

Angela Dennis. Angela is a member of the *Tesk'iyē* Clan. Angela has been teaching the Tahltan language at the Klappan School in Iskut for over 20 years and is a fluent Tahltan speaker. I was able to speak with Angela in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Pauline Hawkins. Pauline's Tahltan name is *Hōstēlmā*, which means, "little groundhog's mother." She is a member of the *Tsesk'iyē* Clan. Pauline is the daughter of retired language teacher, Patrick Carlick, *Hamdā*, and my granny's first cousin, Edith. She has been teaching the Tahltan language at the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek since the fall of 2004. I spoke with Pauline in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

I also followed up with her in person, as well as sending her an email to confirm her words and my understanding of what she said. I also wanted to find out more about how she was impacted and inspired to become a fluent speaker by Marie Quock's Tahltan speech at the 100th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Tahltan Declaration.

Loretta Quock-Sort. Loretta's Tahltan name is *K'idin* and she is a member of the *Tsesk'iyé* Clan. Loretta taught the Tahltan language at the school in Dease Lake from October 29, 2001 until June 2010. Loretta is the daughter of Robert Nelson Quock Sr. and Gladys Violet Quock. I have spoken with Loretta many times about our Tahltan language. However, I was unable to have a conversation with her in person regarding this study, so I sent questions to her via email, and we carried out conversations via this form of written communication.

Sonia Dennis. Sonia is the daughter of Darlene and Elmer Dennis. Her maternal grandparents are Harold and Myra Blackburn, and her paternal grandparents are Alec and Winnifred Dennis. She is a member of the *Tsesk'iyé* Clan and the Shoe-Kawk Family. She was raised in Iskut until the age of 14, and then moved to Dease Lake to attend high school. Sonia has been teaching the Tahltan language at the Dease Lake School since 2010, and has been involved in the community with Tahltan dancing and button blanket making since David Rattray was teaching in Dease Lake in the 1990s. Sonia has also been learning how to tan hides from Penny Louie. I met Sonia at the 100th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Declaration, in which she presented my grandparents with a flag made in honour of one of our great chiefs, *Nānāk*. I was unable to speak with Sonia in person, so I sent the questions to her via email, and we carried out conversations via this form of communication.

Retired Tahltan language teachers.

Regina Louie. Regina is a member of the *Tsesk'iye* Clan and her Tahltan name is *Elāsgēnze*, which means, “pine cone.” Regina is a fluent speaker of Tahltan and she used to teach the Tahltan language at the Klappan School in Iskut until 2003. I spoke with Regina in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Patrick Carlick. Patrick’s Tahltan name is *Hamdā* and he is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan. Patrick is a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language and he taught Tahltan language classes at the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek starting in 1980 for 13 years. I spoke with Patrick in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Janet Vance. Janet’s Tahltan name is *Tsa'tsoyama* and she is a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language. Janet taught the Tahltan language classes at the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek from 1993 to 2004. She is now teaching Tahltan in the Aboriginal HeadStart Program in Telegraph Creek twice a week as part of a health initiative. I spoke with Janet in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Fluent speakers.

Jenny Quock. Jenny is a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language and she taught at the Aboriginal Headstart Program in Iskut until her retirement in 2002. She is the widow of my granny’s first cousin, Robert Quock. During my time in Iskut in 2008, I went out collecting medicine with Jenny, Angela Dennis, and my mother. I also arranged for Jenny and her sister Mary Quock to teach the children at the Iskut School how to make medicine. I spoke with Jenny in person several times and tape-recorded each conversation.

Robert Dennis. Now in his early forties, Robert Dennis is the youngest Tahltan fluent speaker. He is the youngest brother of language teacher Angela Dennis and Marie Quock, Chief Councillor of the Iskut Nation. He is a close friend of Oscar Dennis, who is a learner of the Tahltan language. I spoke with Robert in person, but did not tape-record the conversation as per Robert's request.

Tahltan educators. I have used the term "educators" to include individuals who have been trained to teach children/adults (outside of the language teachers) or who have taken on roles to develop language materials and/or teach our language.

David Rattray. David is *Chi'yōne*, his Tahltan name is *Te'na'as*, and he is from the *Etzenlee* family. David is a Tahltan educator who is currently working as a school counsellor in Fort St. John, BC. During his time in Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake in the 1980s and 1990s, he was a teacher and an administrator.

David was involved with the language at the start of the revitalization process when the orthography, the first curriculum, and the Children's dictionary were developed. He was involved at a hands-on level as both a teacher and administrator. A trained counsellor, David was able to articulate what he saw in regards to the healing that is needed in our communities.

Back in the early 1990s when I was beginning to learn about who I was as a Tahltan, I wanted to find out as much as I could about our Tahltan language. I reached out to David, who was the principal of the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek at the time. He provided me with a copy of the *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons* along with the accompanying cassette tape. In 1996 when I was making my button blanket, I contacted David for guidance on the protocols of making a Tahltan button blanket. Since the early

1990s, David has provided me with guidance and teachings, which I am grateful for. I spoke with David over the phone and tape-recorded the conversation.

Oscar Dennis. Oscar's Tahltan name is *Hotseta* and he is a member of the *Tsesk'iyē* clan. His parents are James Dennis, *Hōk'ābinas*, and Mary Dennis (nee Brown). Oscar was born and raised on Tahltan territory and continues to make Iskut his home. He holds two Bachelor of Arts degrees in Anthropology (Cultural Linguistics) and First Nations Studies (Governmental). Oscar has completed two years of course work and the first year of thesis work for a Master of Arts at the University of Northern British Columbia. As an adult, Oscar has been an active learner of the Tahltan language and has developed a website entitled, "Tahltan Language Lessons." He is currently coordinating the Tahltan Language Revitalization Program for Iskut Valley Health Services. I spoke with Oscar in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Vera Asp. Vera's Tahltan name is Chaudaquock (*Chādakwāk*) and she is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan. Her parents were Thelma Norby and Phillip Asp. Her maternal grandparents were George Agouta and Grace (nee Creyke) Edzerza and paternal grandparents were Edward and Dorothy (nee Jackson) Asp. Vera's Master's work (2004), *Singing a song to honour my mother*, was a comparison of First People's ways of knowing and learning, systems of knowledge and Vygotsky's theory of systems of education. She went on to study archaeology at a doctorate level, with her archaeological research taking place in the village of Tahltan. She was the Vice-President, First Nations Programs and Services, at Yukon College in Whitehorse, Yukon from 1992 to 2001. Vera currently is a member of the Tahltan Heritage Resources Environmental Assessment

Team, Heritage portfolio and also a member of the Tahltan Ancestral Study. Vera and I have kept in close contact since 2006 via email and phone conversations.

Carolyn Doody. Carolyn is a member of the *Ch'iyōne* Clan and her grandparents are Agnes Emma Quock and Andy Dennis from Iskut. She has a Bachelor of Education from the University of British Columbia and is currently working on a Master of Education in Education Counselling from the University of Northern British Columbia. She is also managing the Aboriginal Child and Youth Mental Health Program in Terrace through the Kermode Friendship Society. Carolyn was the principal of the Klappan School in Iskut from September 2008 until June 2010, and before that, she was Iskut First Nation's education administrator from 2004 to 2009. She began her teaching career in 2002 teaching grades 2-4 for two years in the Klappan School and grades 6-7 in 2007-2008.

Carolyn was the principal of the school in Iskut when I was carrying out part of my research and she was very helpful and supportive. I have spoken with Carolyn many times about our Tahltan language, but was unable to have a conversation with her in person regarding this study. I sent questions to her via email, and we carried out conversations via this form of written communication.

Tahltan administrators.

Curtis Rattray. Curtis's Tahltan name is *Nitsclān'ats*, which refers to the ground after the caribou have walked over it and he is a member of the *Tsesk'iye* Clan. His parents are Ab and Christine Rattray and his maternal grandparents are Chris and Elizabeth Edzerza. Curtis was involved at an administrative level with the beginnings of the language society and language authority in his role as Chair of the Tahltan Central

Council. For the past few years, he was the Aboriginal Language Coordinator for the First Nations Education Steering Committee, an independent society that works toward the improvement of education for BC First Nations learners. I spoke with Curtis in person and tape-recorded the conversation.

Christine Ball. Christine's parents are Alfred and Opal Ball, she is a member of the *Tsesk'iyé* Clan, and she is in the *Cawtoonma* Family. Christine is the Director of Health Programs for the Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority. My conversation with Christine included finding out about the work that is being carried out by the health authorities in regards to language and culture. I spoke with Christine in person, but did not tape-record the conversation as per Christine's request.

Our Land

Language, culture, land, and names are closely linked for Indigenous peoples. Thus, an understanding of these connections related to traditional Tahltan land is necessary. Oral traditions and Ancestral knowledge recognize our people as the original inhabitants of the Stikine River watershed, a region in Northern British Columbia that encompasses 250,000 square kilometres, and extends into the Yukon.



Figure 5. Map of Tahltan Territory.

Our traditional territory is breathtakingly beautiful, with such natural wonders as Mount Edziza, the Stikine Canyon, and *Labāno*, also known as the Sacred Headwaters.

Geographically, our territory is roughly divided into two regions, with each area having its own unique climate, landforms, plants, and animals. The lower Stikine River region extends through into the Coast Mountain Range to the coast and has a mild, coastal climate with heavy precipitation. The majority of our territory is part of the upper Stikine River region, the Stikine Plateau, and has a more variable, extreme climate with low precipitation. It is in this dry plateau region that our people lived and travelled, and

continue to live and travel, gaining intimate knowledge of, as well as respect for, the plants and animals who share this amazing land with us. In the words of Tahltan educator Vera Asp (2004),

We come from a powerful land in northern British Columbia, of canyons, rivers, lakes, and tall majestic mountains, all with an abundance of resources which continue to sustain our people as it has from time immemorial. Our strength as a Nation both past and present is a reflection of that land and the multiple generations of connection to it (p. 1).

In the words of Tahltan artist Dempsey Bob, you cannot separate our people from our land:

You can't separate nature from our people,
from our culture.
Because we're all connected,
we're all connected to the animals,
we're connected to the environment.
(as cited in Toews, 2008).

Our communities. Our past settlements have been located in the Stikine Plateau, with many of our Elders stating that there were originally nine Tahltan villages. One of the traditional communities, Tahltan, is located 12 miles northeast of Telegraph Creek, along the Stikine River. Presently, there are three Tahltan communities: *Tlegohin* (Telegraph Creek,) *Luwe Chon* (Iskut,) and *Tatl'ah* (Dease Lake).

Mount Edziza. Vera Asp has carried out doctoral-level archaeological research in our territory. In her Master's thesis, Asp (2004) wrote,

Our ancestors, pre-European contact, were leaders in the trade of obsidian, or volcanic glass, because located in our traditional territory is Ah deeth Tha (Mt.

Edziza), a volcanic cone mountain. Obsidian was a most “tradable” commodity because of the sharpness of the edge for making micro-blade tools; cutting tools, atlatl darts, arrow heads [sic], all essential tools for survival of the people (p. 2).

Archaeologist Roy Carlson (1994) has reported that obsidian from Mount Edziza has been found as far west as Haida Gwaii, to the north by the upper Yukon drainage and Ground Hog Bay in Alaska, to the east past the Rocky Mountains in Alberta, and to the south on the central coast of British Columbia. Carlson (1994) reports, “Edziza obsidian has demonstrably been traded beyond its source area for the last 9,500 years” (p. 352).

Sacred Headwaters. The *Tlabānotine* territory has been called “The Sacred Headwaters” since that is where the headwaters of the Stikine, Nass, and Skeena rivers originate. These three mighty rivers have provided sustenance and a living to the Tahltan and the Tlingit (Stikine), the Nisga’a (Nass), and the Gitx̱san and Ts’msyen (Skeena) peoples from time immemorial.

Tahltan Declaration. On the eighteenth day of October, nineteen hundred and ten, a declaration was signed by: *Nanok* (Chief of the Tahltans); *Nastutla* (Little Jackson); *George Assadza*, *Keneti* (Big Jackson); and 80 other members of the Tahltan Nation. The signing of the Declaration signified that the Tahltan Nation was asserting sovereignty over our traditional territory, and more specifically, seeking formal relations with the provincial and federal governments, the settlement of treaties, and sufficient compensation for the relinquishment of title (McIlwraith, 2010).

Earlier in 1910, the Lillooet Tribes signed a similar declaration, with the assistance of ethnographer James Teit (Ignace, 2008). Under the tutelage of anthropologist Franz Boas, Teit was the main ethnographer of the Nlaka’pamux and other

interior Salish tribes during the first part of the twentieth century until his untimely death in 1922 (Thompson, 2007). Because of his political work with interior First Nations, Tahltan leaders sought Teit's help in regards to their land and rights while he was acting as a game hunter in their territory from 1903 to 1912. In 1910, the Tahltan Nation joined the larger Indian rights movement in the province and in October, produced their own declaration (Thompson, 2007).

While these political documents were presented in the English language and not in the languages of the Aboriginal leaders, Teit did not so much as write the documents for First Nations groups, as he "channeled" their concerns. "Teit acted as 'secretary' or scribe in the writing and presentation, or as 'witness' either explicitly or implicitly, in all of the memorials, declarations and presentations of the Interior chiefs" (Ignace, 2008, p. 311). In his doctoral dissertation, Ron Ignace (Stsmél'ecqen) (2008), a member of the Secwépemc Nation, wrote about Teit's involvement with his nation during the first part of the twentieth century, and more specifically, his writing style:

Teit's ethnographic monographs, including his summaries and renditions of Shuswap myths and oral histories are written in the style of turn of the century Victorian prose, rather than within the conventions of speech of either Interior Salish language discourse or the Aboriginal peoples' conventions of English speech. The Memorials, however, reveal a different style. They easily translate into the aboriginal languages, and make use of English terms, meanings and concepts familiar and common in the Aboriginal languages. While the Laurier Memorial and other documents of the time were composed in English, they nonetheless reflect the way of speaking of the Interior Aboriginal peoples. This is

clear form [*sic*] the simple but eloquent style of speech, the expressions and metaphors used, and of course from the concerns which are addressed (pp. 311-312).

Wendy Wickwire (1994) echoes what Ignace has stated in regards to questions of the authorship of memorials, declarations and other political writings that Teit was involved with during the early twentieth century.

Just because the words appear in English, a language foreign to the chiefs, they do not represent the views of an outsider. Quite the contrary: in addition to all we can distil from the political history of the period and the commentaries on that history, the style and content of the surviving documentation has strong links to its Native signatories (p. 17).

The Declaration of the Tahltan Tribe in its entirety can be found in Appendix A. The three signatories of the Declaration all use their Tahltan name first and foremost in the document, lending credence to the importance of names. While language is not specifically mentioned in the Declaration, the importance of our land is:

We claim the sovereign right to all the country of our tribe – this country of ours which we have held intact from the encroachments of other tribes, from time immemorial, at the cost of our blood. We have done this because our lives depended on our country. To lose it meant we would lose our means of living, and therefore our lives.

Our Language

The Tahltan language, called *Didenekeh* in our language, is classified in what is termed the Northern branch of the Athapaskan language family, with the Athapaskan

language family being made up of three subgroups – Northern, Pacific Coast, and Apachean. Languages in the Northern branch of the Athapaskan language family are spoken in the interior of British Columbia, northern Alberta, northern Saskatchewan, northern Manitoba, Yukon Territory, Northwest Territory, and the interior of Alaska (Bob, 1999).

The development of the Tahltan practical orthography is based upon interviews that linguist Jeff Leer (1985) carried out with Tahltan fluent speakers Charles Quock, Peggy Quock, Patrick Carlick, and George Edzerdza at the Alaska Native Language Center at the University of Alaska from July 23-26, 1985. From there, linguist Colin Carter (1991) produced a Tahltan practical orthography based on the principles of a phonetic alphabet, in which every sound in the language is always represented by the same symbol.

In Appendix B, Tahltan Language Practical Orthography, a list of both consonants and vowels is provided, which gives English language equivalents for Tahltan sounds based on the key developed by Carter (1991, p. iii-v).

KISHEGWET EJINH ESGHANI'ĀN: "Rosie Dennis Gave Me A Song"

–A Tahltan Research Framework from A Tahltan Worldview



Figure 6. Rosie Dennis Singing the Dream Song.

Over the last two decades, I have begun to really understand, to really *know* what it means to be connected to my Ancestors. A few years ago, I received a wonderful gift from one of my Elders, Rosie Dennis. Rosie was one of my first Tahltan teachers; she taught me how to dance traditionally and she taught me about our language through songs and stories. In the summer of 2005, Rosie told my grandmother, her childhood friend, about a dream she had in which her father gave her a song and instructed her to give it to a Crow. Rosie had decided to give it to me because she said that I had been learning about our language and knew a lot about our Tahltan ways. She sang the song in both

Tahltn and English and explained why she chose to give the song to me, as opposed to other people in the Crow clan who also wanted this song.

Our people, you're going to hear about it.

They tell me, "Give me that song."

No, I wouldn't.

'Cause I want she –

she be well educated of Tahltn, her.

I hear so much of her, about her, you know.

She can talk Tahltn.

[Rosie gives an introduction to song in Tahltn and then in English]:

My dad,

I dreamed this song,

my dad sing it to me.

Bunch of people coming behind me and he tell me,

"My little girl, Kishegwet, you give it away, this song.

But don't give it to Wolf,

you give it to Crow, like me, this song.

So I'm gonna sing it to you.

I hope you understand what all I say."

"Okay, Dad," I said.

And he starts singing.

So I give it to Mrs. Callbreath's granddaughter,

that's who I give it to.

Judy.

Okay, I'm going to sing it...

[Rosie sings song in Tahltn]:

Eschidle da a ha ha

Eschidle na a ha ha

Nadetl'id eh eh yah

Edade idida na ha ha

Eschidle na a ha ha

Eschidle na a ha ha

Nadetl'id eh nah ah

Edade idida ah ha heyha ah ha

Eschidle da a ha ha

Eschidle na a ha ha

Nadetl'id eh eh ah

Edade idāda ah ha heyha

[Rosie translates song in English]:

My youngest brother's comin'.

My youngest brother's comin'.

Where's my oldest sister?

Where's my oldest sister?

That the way this song go.

That's how we call it, dream song.

And I give it to my little niece,

my husband Freddy's niece, own this song.

So I hope everybody enjoy it when she sing it in a party or whatever.

(personal communication, August 2, 2005).

Receiving this song is a big honour to me and I am still humbled by such a gift. What makes this song even more sacred is that Rosie passed away ten days after bestowing such an honour on me. As a Tahltan researcher, it is like I received one of the highest forms of ethics approval, since this song came through one of my Tahltan teachers from one of my Ancestors. As a Tahltan learner, I was given this song because I am learning who I am as a Tahltan, and indicates to me that I am on the right path.

Mi'kmaq scholar Marie Battiste (2008) has stated that,

Indigenous people's epistemology is derived from the immediate ecology; from people's experiences, perceptions, thoughts, and memory, including experiences shared with others; and from the spiritual world discovered in dreams, visions, inspirations, and signs interpreted with the guidance of healers or elders (p. 499).

This song came through one of my teachers, Rosie Dennis, via one of my Tahltan Ancestors, her father Ned Carlick. It is an example of immediate ecology as both were very much connected to the land their entire life. Rosie's wish was for me to sing this song at gatherings. Battiste wrote that "immediate ecology" includes experiences that are shared with others. I would like to use this song as a way to begin the sharing of the

learnings that I have gathered on this Tahltan research journey. The dream song signifies the beginning of my sharing of the learnings from this study. As per Rosie's wishes, I will sing the dream when appropriate, especially as it pertains to Tahltan language revitalization.

In working with the Athapaskan Dane-zaa of northeastern British Columbia, Robin Ridington (2006) describes how songs “‘brought down from heaven’ by people known as Dreamers are used to facilitate communication between living humans, the spirits of people who have gone before, and animal persons or forces of nature” (p. 171).

Dana-zaa Dreamer Charlie Yahey describes a similar experience to that of Rosie's:

Just like this kind of tape recording
 you can hear the song.
 That is how they grab it.
 They wake up with that song.
 When they wake up in the morning they won't lose it.
 They just sing the song that way – how it turns
 and other people who come in there will sing with it.
 From there that is how come there are lots of songs all over.
 Some other guys will come and straighten up that song.
 They will come in and sing it after the Dreamer
 and from there make a dance.
 (as cited in Ridington, 2006, p. 171).

I see this song facilitating the sharing of the learnings with my people, and I hope that I am able to “straighten up” that song so that I can sing it when sharing the learnings.

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi: A Tahltan Worldview

The song that Rosie gave to me connects me to my Ancestors. As a Tahltan researcher, this connection to my Ancestors, as well as to my people, our land, and our language, is crucial to me in identifying a research framework that originates not only

from an Indigenous perspective, but, more specifically, from a Tahltan worldview.

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi is a Tahltan term that one of my Elders used when I described to her how I felt when I visited Tahltan territory for the first time. Peggy Campbell, a fluent Tahltan speaker, said that it described how I felt at home in the traditional territory of my maternal grandparents and mother, even though it was the first time I had been there. Peggy said that the literal meaning is, “their roots are from that Tahltan village” (literally: *keyeh* – village; *hedekeyeh* – their village; *hots'ih* – from; *kāhidi* – roots.)

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi explains how people are connected to their territory; that their roots are there, and their ancestors are in them. Peggy has described it as the relationship a person has with their traditional territory and their people. As Tahltans, we are connected to our Ancestors through our language and our land. Vera Asp has stated that we have a strong identity and personal relationship with the land. One of our Ancestors, Benny Frank (1976), stated the following at the Association of United Tahltans Founding Assembly in Telegraph Creek in July 1976:

You kids...
 you talk about this land with paper...
 it's about our Ancestors who gave their blood
 so we can call this Tahltan land...
 We're from this land.

In *Epistemology*, Cree scholar Willie Ermine (1999) writes: “Our Aboriginal languages and culture contain the accumulated knowledge of our ancestors...” (p. 104). After reading articles, dissertations, and books on Indigenous research and methodology written by such Indigenous scholars as Hanohano (1999), Weber-Pillwax (1999), Absolon and Willett (2004), Wilson (2001, 2004, 2008), Atleo (2004, 2011), Bastien (1999), Kovach (2006, 2009), L.T. Smith (1999) and G.H. Smith (1997), I have been able

to give voice to a Tahltan worldview, namely *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*, which has given rise to a Tahltan research framework that includes Tahltan ontology, epistemology, axiology, methodology, and pedagogy. All of these components that make up a Tahltan worldview are all intertwined and connected – like threads in a button blanket.

All My Relations.

Self-In-Relation (Graveline, 1998).

Relationality (Wilson, 2008).

Tsawalk, A Nuu-chah-nulth worldview – “Everything is one.” (Atleo, 2004).

All of these terms focus on

the interconnectedness,

the interrelatedness of Indigenous peoples

with all that is around us.

I grappled with the terms

ontology – “nature of reality” and

epistemology – “how we think about reality”

and realized

like the threads in a button blanket,

they cannot be separated;

they are both part of a people’s worldview.

*They are as interconnected as our people are
with our land, language, and each other.*

From my first visit to Tahltan territory,

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi – “Our Ancestors Are In Us”

was a term that I learned

and that was attributed to how I felt

upon my first visit to my people’s homeland.

How I felt so connected

to both the people and the land,

that I knew that my roots were there.

It wasn’t until I started writing my dissertation

and began searching for a way to articulate

a Tahltan research framework

and a Tahltan methodology

that it came to me that

Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi – “Our Ancestors Are In Us”

could be used to articulate a Tahltan worldview

which would encompass Tahltan ontology and epistemology

as well as Tahltan axiology, methodology, and pedagogy.

All parts of an Indigenous research framework that

honour our connections, our relationships...

All My Relations,

Self-In-Relation,

Relationality,
Tsawalk,
Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi.
 (Edōsdi, March 2012).

Tewan historian Alfonso Ortiz defines “worldview”:

Worldview 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 (as cited in Graveline, 1998, p. 19).

From this definition, *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi* definitely can be seen to be a Tahltan worldview, as it articulates both a connection to the land – “their roots are from that Tahltan village” – as well as a connection to our Ancestors, which gives rise to our identity as Tahltan people. Anthropologist Michael Kearney (as cited in Graveline, 1998) makes the connection between worldview and epistemology: “A worldview is a set of images and assumptions about the world.... Since a worldview is knowledge about the world, what we are talking about here is epistemology, the theory of knowledge (p. 19).

It is difficult to separate worldview from ontology and epistemology, so I will not try to separate them. Wilson (2008) sees ontology and epistemology as being part of a process of relationships that create a shared reality. Tahltan educator Vera Asp defines ontology as “*a way of being.*” Ontology can also be defined as “what knowledge is” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6), “assumptions about the nature of reality” (Rigney, 1999, p. 109) or the nature of being. In regards to ontology, Cree researcher Shawn Wilson (2008, p. 33) asks the question, “Is there one ‘real’ world that each of us observes differently through our own senses, or do various worlds exist, depending upon the point of view of the

observer?” Basically, it involves what people believe to be real in their world. Vera Asp points to the connection between ontology and language:

*Our Tahltan language
provides the means to “think”
and means to provide a Tahltan outlook
and ultimately a Tahltan ontology.
Aboriginal languages are not the only means
of imparting these “kinds” of knowledge
but they can provide a foundation for all other learning.
(Vera Asp).*

Epistemology encompasses how people think or how they think about their reality (Wilson 2001, p. 175), or simply as “how we know knowledge” (Creswell, 2003, p. 6).

In *Aboriginal Epistemology*, Cree scholar Willie Ermine (1999) writes:

We need to experience the life force from which creativity flows, and our Aboriginal resources such as language and culture are our touchstones for achieving this. It is imperative that our children take up the cause of our languages and cultures because therein lies Aboriginal epistemology, which speaks of holism (p. 110).

Rains, Archibald and Deyhle (2000) position Indigenous epistemologies and paradigms as having “developed over *thousands* of years of *sustained* living on this Land” (p. 337).

As a Tahltan person, my ontology – my reality – and my epistemology – how I think about my reality as a Tahltan person – is summed up in *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi*, the Tahltan worldview that I have named.

Tahltan Ethics.

The research questions that I asked in this study are in line with Tahltan morals or ethics, or a Tahltan axiology, in that what I researched will give voice to my people, as well as being beneficial to our people as a whole. From a Tahltan axiology, I am

accountable to both the co-researchers in my study, as well as to my Ancestors, Elders and fellow Tahltans, and I need to ensure that I protect the knowledge and wisdom that has been shared with me. As a Tahltan researcher, educator, and learner, I have many responsibilities to my people. The knowledge and wisdom I have been given is a gift from my people and so is much more than just research data. This transmission of knowledge and wisdom that my Elders have given to me for the past two decades is all part of being a Tahltan learner. My “research” began back in 1991 when I began my “true” education with my Elders, and it will continue on long after I complete my doctoral degree. As a Tahltan, I need to ensure that I honour the gifts given to me by my Ancestors and Elders, which involves letting people know who my teachers are and what they have taught me when I pass on these valuable gifts of knowledge and wisdom to other generations.

Cree scholar Winona Stevenson (2000), in writing her doctoral dissertation, speaks to the teachings she has received from community members going beyond that of just “research” and the responsibility that comes with knowledge:

The framework and foundations of Chapter five is based on nêhiyawîwîhtamawâkana, *Cree teachings*, which come from many sources – family, friends, teachers, recorded oral history collections, and a handful of Cree writings. Each posed unique methodological challenges in the context of writing of this dissertation. The lessons from family, friends, and teachers, along with my own experientially-gained insights, began long ago before this dissertation was imagined. According to Cree teachings, because they were given, this cumulative

knowledge-bundle is now mine to use and transmit in a manner that respects its integrity and protocols (p. 14).

I pay homage to the wise words of Aboriginal researchers such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Jo-ann Archibald, Graham Smith, Cora Weber-Pillwax, Maggie Kovach, Kathy Absolon, Cam Willett, Lester-Irabinna Rigney, and Shawn Wilson, who speak to the importance of ensuring that Aboriginal research is respectful, relational and transformative. Aboriginal researcher Gail Dana-Sacco (2010) writes about the importance of relational accountability in regards to an Indigenous research paradigm:

Native American research should be grounded in an Indigenous paradigm that recognizes knowledge as shared and relational, and this research should be conducted with methods that carry relational accountability, which holds the researcher accountable for fulfilling a responsibility to all relationships with the natural environment (p. 65).

Maori academic Graham Smith has said that Indigenous research needs to be transformative and positive (personal communication, April 28, 2007) and Indigenous Australian scholar Lester-Irabinna Rigney (1999) writes that “Indigenous people now want research and its designs to contribute to the self determination and liberation struggles as defined and controlled by their communities” (pp. 109-110).

In terms of *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*, I am responsible to my Ancestors and my people for my research. In terms of the scholarly community, the academy has its own “axiology” or set of ethics that researchers need to adhere to. As an Indigenous researcher, I am obligated to both communities. McIvor (2010a) points to the dual responsibility that Indigenous researchers have when carrying out research.

We are responsible to a scholarly community as well as to our own and other Indigenous communities to which we may be a part. We are held accountable to Elders, wisdom-keepers, leaders, family members, and fellow community members for what we write and teach (p. 141).

When I began to examine axiology from both a Tahltan and university perspective, I saw one main difference in terms of the length of time to carry out the research. From an Indigenous perspective, I see research as having both immediate and ongoing relational accountabilities. It is important to let your people know what you are going to do during the actual study, which I consider to be immediate relational accountability. However, as a Tahltan researcher, my research does not start with the beginning of the degree research process, and it definitely does not end with the defense of the dissertation and the awarding of the degree, which I consider to be ongoing relational accountability. In terms of the university requirements, I consider it to be immediate relational accountability as the length of time that I was expected to adhere to the terms set out in the “Application for Ethics Approval for Human Participant Research” had a definite start date and end date.

Immediate relational accountability. When I began the research process for this specific study, I knew how important it was to let my people know what I was doing, so I spoke with family, community members as well as the two chief counsellors and the president of the Tahltan Central Council. I found the university’s “Application for Ethics Approval for Human Participant Research” to be helpful in regards to the types of questions that I had to answer, such as types of approvals, dissemination of results, recruitment and selection of participants, data collection methods, informed consent,

compensation, use of data, to name a few. From these questions, and from the responsibility I have to my people, I was able to carry out parallel immediate relational accountabilities that would fulfill my obligations to both my Tahltan community and the scholarly community.

First of all, I posted a one-page “Invitation to participate” (see Appendix C) on community bulletin boards in the three Tahltan communities of Telegraph Creek, Iskut, and Dease Lake addressed to members of the Tahltan Nation about my research. I also spoke with Tahltan Elders who are members of both Tahltan Bands and who are also represented by Elders organizations in the communities of Telegraph Creek (Indigenous Tahltan Elders) and Iskut (Klabona Keepers Elders Society). I sent letters of intent (see Appendix D) to the Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, Tahltan Central Council, Indigenous Tahltan Elders and the Klabona Keepers Elders Society seeking approval for this research. I then followed up with face-to-face meetings, emails, and/or phone calls to ensure that these organizations had an opportunity to ask questions about my research. I received oral support from all five of the organizations, which was then followed up by written support in the form of emails from the Tahltan Nation and Iskut Nation and written correspondence from the Tahltan Central Council and the Indigenous Tahltan Elders (see Appendix E for Letters of Approval). Making a personal connection was very important, not only for immediate relational accountability, but also for ongoing relational accountability.

As a member of the Tahltan Nation, I have close ties to many community members in the three Tahltan communities. I sought out co-researchers based on both my background knowledge of who would best help me answer my research questions, as well

as suggestions from the five organizations listed above. I contacted potential co-researchers in person, by phone, or by email. If potential co-researchers agreed to participate, a date and time was arranged to meet. When meeting with a co-researcher, I presented the consent form (see Appendix F) which restated information from the one-pager, "Invitation to participate." I explained to each of the co-researchers that involvement was voluntary and that if they decided to participate, they could withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. If they withdrew part way through the study, their information would only be used if they agreed. If I was going to talk with the co-researcher over the phone, or if they were going to answer the interview questions via email, I would send them the consent form, along with a self-addressed stamped envelope, so that they could sign the consent form and return it to me.

For most of the conversations, I was able to meet in person with the co-researchers. For all but two of these live conversations, I was able to audiotape the conversation. For some, I also videotaped the co-researcher while we spoke. When I was unable to meet with the co-researcher in person, I either spoke on the phone with the co-researcher while taping the conversation, or I emailed the co-researcher the questions and they sent back their answers to me via email. Often in these situations, I would follow-up with the individual via email and/or call them on the telephone. After conversations were completed, co-researchers were acknowledged with a gift to honour the sharing of their knowledge and wisdom, in the Indigenous tradition.

I provided co-researchers with duplicates of any audiotape and videotape footage, photos, and copies of the transcribed conversations. As well, I highlighted the portions of

the conversations that I used in my dissertation, as well as included the different ways I may have presented their words. Co-researchers were given the opportunity to verify what they said, and to either delete, modify, or expand on what they had shared. Because the knowledge and wisdom that they were sharing was to help with the revitalization of our language, no one requested anonymity. At any time, the co-researchers can consent to having any of this raw data made accessible to Tahltan groups of their choosing.

I often found the consent form to be a barrier, even with my own grandparents, who trusted me implicitly. Reading over two pages of academic prose explaining the research can be quite intimidating. In the words of co-researcher and teacher Jenny Quock,

*Like people that have been to college and university everywhere,
they come up to us and make meeting.
And they talk their high language.
We don't know what they saying.
We don't even know.
'Cause we never been to college or university or stuff like that.
And some words they use are too powerful for us Elders to listen to.*
(Jenny Quock).

For many teachers and co-researchers, they did not read the two-page document before signing the consent form. I made sure that they received copies of the consent form and told them to get back to me if they had any problems with the form. However, I feel that because of my being Tahltan and my relationship to them, they trusted me to not take advantage of them. For that very reason, I feel an even greater sense of responsibility and accountability to my people to carry out honourable research that will be useful to my people.

Ongoing relational accountability. I have been building relationships with my people for the last two decades. Because I am Tahltan, and because of who I am related

to and the connections I have made with Ancestors and Elders, I feel a heightened sense of responsibility to ensure that the research I carry out is transformative, relational, and useful to my people. For that reason, I see this specific study as just being a small part of my research journey that began over twenty years ago and that will continue for the rest of my life, and why I need to position my work as ongoing relational accountability, with no end date in sight.

My Tahltan Methodology – Tahltan Voiceability.

Like axiology, methodology is based upon maintaining relationships and being accountable to those relationships (Wilson, 2008). I wrote this poem, “The Strength of Our Voices” as a way to not only pay homage to the strong voices that have guided me through this dissertation process, but to also articulate specifically how we as Tahltan people need to have strong voices in order to revitalize our language.

*Whenever I found myself
lost
or overwhelmed
or feeling like I couldn't possibly pull together
all of the pieces of this puzzle
I call my dissertation.
This dissertation –
made up of many voices -
-the quoted voices of Indigenous Academics
-the quoted voices of non-Indigenous Academics
-my voice, however unsure,
-and the voices of my people.
The specific voices that always bring me back
to where I need to be
are the voices of my people.
People who have taught me –
– taught me so much about what it means to be Tahltan.
Tahltan Educators
Tahltan Elders
Tahltan Ancestors.
Listening to their strong voices
either orally – in person or on tape*

*or transcribed, where I can “hear” their voices speaking to me.
 Their strong voices
 pull me back into the world of our language, our culture, our land.
 Into a world of hope and optimism
 but also of a past and present pain and shame
 and into a world of healing.
 On a path to Tahltan language revitalization
 and the path to my role in Tahltan language revitalization.
 (Edōsdi, June 2011)*

Tahltan Voiceability is couched in the Tahltan worldview that I have articulated – *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi*, “Our Ancestors are in Us.” Tahltan Voiceability involves the teachings of our Ancestors, learning and knowing these teachings, and the sharing of these teachings with our people.

In regards to this study, it includes the learnings that the co-researchers have shared with me. This Tahltan methodology focuses on the voices of my people, which includes my voice in my roles as researcher, educator, and student. I am inspired by the words of Métis scholar, Fyre Jean Graveline (2000):

As Métis woman, scholar, activist, teacher and healer
 I enact First Voice as pedagogy and methodology.
 Observing my own lived experience as an Educator
 Sharing meanings with Others
 Create collective context...
 My Voice is Heard
 in concert with Students and Community Participants...(p. 363).

Tahltan voices are important in terms of both the process of the research and the questions that are being answered. Creswell (2003) defines methodology as “the process for studying knowledge (p. 6).” At a basic level, methodology can be seen to be a research process that enables you to answer research questions. However, how you study and answer a question is often as important as the results you collect, and the process of methodology can help researchers work that out. Methodology guides the research and is

based on our people's ontology and epistemology, which is all wrapped up in our worldview, *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*. Methodology can be seen to be a process that allows our ways of thinking – our epistemology – to learn more about our reality – our ontology (Wilson, 2001). I see Tahltan Voiceability as a way in which to not only learn more about our Tahltan ways of thinking and knowing and of our reality, but also as a way to present and share the voices from this research. Methodologies provide a theory and analysis of how research can go forward. “Methodologies are the theoretical and conceptual frameworks within which research as a practice is located” (Strega, 2005, p. 205).

In regards to Tahltan Voiceability, I define “voiceability” in a similar way to “readability,” with readability (n.d.) being defined as, “the quality of written language that makes it easy to read and understand.” In terms of voiceability, I came up with this term when trying to find a way to portray the Tahltan voice – including that of the co-researchers, my Elders and Ancestors, and myself – in such a way that readers would be able to “hear” our voices on paper. However, I also wanted to extend it to mean how a people can find their voice and find strength in their voice, in order to heal and become a stronger, healthier nation.

I have gleaned much inspiration from Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline (2000), and when finding a way to present the different Tahltan voices, I thought about what she has stated in regards to embracing “First Voice as Methodology” (p. 362). In regards to “readability,” Graveline (2000) sees it in a negative light, along with anonymity or objectivity, categorization, and brevity, as being one of the four rules of status quo editing, or “Eurocentric cultural norms” (p. 366). After reading her poetic narrative –

which I have read over and over again to garner all of the wisdom that I can! – I extended the idea of “readability” in a more positive light together with that of “First Voice as methodology” to come up with voiceability. I see voiceability as a positive way to give voice to the words of my people both on paper and in the larger sense.

On my journey of learning who I am as a Tahltan, I have learned that we are connected to our Ancestors through our land and language. I have a sense of responsibility as an educator to ensure that our younger generations also feel this connection and learn from their Ancestors. That is why I feel that pedagogy plays a key role in not only our worldview, but in this specific Tahltan methodology. Pedagogy (2001) is defined as “the art or science of teaching” (p. 1071). However, looking at the etymology of the word, it is derived from two Greek words: *pais* – child and *ago* – to lead, and it literally means, “to lead a child” (Freire, 2002). In his introduction to the 30th Anniversary Edition of Paulo Freire’s *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2002), Donaldo Macedo writes that because of this literal meaning of pedagogy, “education is inherently directive and must always be transformative” (as cited in Freire, 2002, p. 25).

As part of the Tahltan worldview that I have outlined, Tahltan people are not only actively involved in the education of their children, but of all their people, regardless of age. I see *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi* as a way for our people, both young and old, to make connections with our Ancestors. As an educator, I also see it as a way to connect the generations. Graveline (2000) states, “I enact First Voice as pedagogy and methodology” (p. 363), which speaks to the importance of our people – our voices – playing a crucial role in the education of our children. My Tahltan name, *Edōsdi*, means “someone who raises up children and pets.” As a trained elementary school teacher, I

have a connection to our youth. As an adult educator, I continue to try to find ways to connect the younger with the older generations. As a Tahltan learner over the last two decades, I have created close bonds with my Ancestors and Elders. I am connected to my family, my people, my land and my language, and I feel a great sense of responsibility to all of them. Stó:lō author Lee Maracle expresses this same sense of responsibility that I feel in her poem “Creation”:

I know nothing
of great mysteries
know less of creation
I do know
that the farther backward
in time I travel
the more grandmothers
and the farther forward
the more grandchildren
I am obligated to both.
(as cited in Grant, 1992, p. 338).

As McIvor (2010a) has written,

Our ancestors are with us at all times and our families/communities are the foundation of our lives; therefore, what would our research be without them in it? My ancestors and my children are the entire reason that I do what I do. Why would my research be void of them? (p. 147).

Cherokee poet Joy Harjo echoes this sense of responsibility:

I feel strongly that I have a responsibility to all of the sources I am: to all past and future ancestors, to my home country, to all places that I touch down on that are myself, to all voices, all women, all of my tribe, all people, all earth, and beyond that to all beginnings and endings. In a strange kind of sense it frees me to believe

in myself, to be able to speak, to have a voice because I have to” (as cited in Bruchac, 1983, p. 92).

I see pedagogy as being part of the Tahltan worldview and Tahltan methodology that I have articulated, which is also based on relationality and responsibility. Indigenous scholar Sandra Grande (2008) makes the connection between methodology and pedagogy by naming her Indigenous methodology, “Red Pedagogy,” which she says, “is about engaging the development of ‘community-based power’ in the interest of ‘a responsible political, economic, and spiritual society’” (p. 250). Her use of the word pedagogy speaks to the ways in which we must use research to empower our people, which to me involves connecting the generations, teaching our children, and giving voice to our people.

Gathering of the Learnings – Methods. Based on a *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi* worldview, from which I have developed a Tahltan methodology – Tahltan Voiceability – and having outlined a Tahltan axiology, ontology, epistemology, and pedagogy – I can now move forward and outline the details of my research. “One’s worldview is reflected in the detailed procedures of the study...” (Garman, 2006, p. 2-3). It is important to talk about methods at this point. Methodology is important in that it sets the context for the questions to be asked; it establishes the tools and methods to be used and shapes the analyses (Smith, 1999). Once the methodology has been chosen, the methods can be chosen.

Methods are the particular tools or techniques that you use to actually gather data.

To continue the research journey analogy, methods are the means of transportation. Thus, as long as the methods fit the ontology, epistemology and

axiology of the Indigenous paradigm, they can be borrowed from other suitable research paradigms (Wilson, 2008, p. 39).

Harding (1987) succinctly defines a research method as “a technique for (or way of proceeding in) gathering evidence” (p. 2). In her dissertation, Maggie Kovach interviewed Maori scholar Graham Smith and what he told her has stayed with me and has been very important in the way I have come to a Tahltan worldview and methodology.

...when we looked at the existing theoretical and methodological tools hanging on the wall of the University to help us understand and to deal with these Maori specific issues, we would sometimes discover that the available tools sometimes, did not completely fit the circumstances that we were dealing with. If you extend this idea a little bit further, my view was that we needed to put some Indigenous theory tools, or in New Zealand sense ‘Maori tools’, on the wall of the University along side of all of the other theoretical tools and all the other research methodologies, so that we would have a more effective and wider choice of options. The argument here then concerns the necessity to add new indigenous options to the existing range of ‘tools’ and not argue for the complete deconstruction of western theoretical tools (as cited in Kovach, 2006, p156).

What I take from Graham Smith’s words is that methods from western research paradigms can be used in Indigenous research paradigms. However, it is important to ensure that the methods are appropriate for use in an Indigenous research paradigm; do the methods fit the Indigenous research paradigm’s axiology, epistemology, and ontology? (Wilson, 2008). When all is said and done, when choosing research methods,

whether they are tools from western academia or are Indigenous tools, it is vital that Indigenous researchers ask themselves the following questions:

Does this method allow me to fulfill my obligations in my role? Further, does this method help to build a relationship between myself as a researcher and my research topic? Does it build respectful relationships with the other co-researchers in the research? (Wilson, 2001, p. 178).

The methods that I have used are in keeping with the Tahltan worldview that I have outlined, as well as Tahltan ethics, and my methodology – Tahltan Voiceability. The methods include having conversations with the co-researchers, as well as my observations and thoughts – the voice of Edōsdi, which I will outline in more detail.

Conversations with co-researchers. Educator and researcher Celia Haig-Brown (1992) has written about the concept of “research as conversation” (p. 104), which is characterized as “an open-ended interview with opportunity for both sides to engage in talk rather than one part doing most of the talking” (Archibald, 2008, p. 47). I have purposely chosen to use the term “conversations” as opposed to “interviews” to characterize the interactions I had with the co-researchers. Right from when I first started learning about Tahltan culture, language, and our people’s relationship with the land, I did not interview my Elders. Rather, we would visit, we would talk, we would laugh. They would tell me stories or teach me to sing and dance. I also did a lot of listening, sitting quietly while my grandparents visited with their family and friends from back home. Regarding interviews, Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon talked about the contradiction of doing interviews when speaking with Cree researcher Maggie Kovach about her search for an Indigenous methodology: “Even the idea of doing interviews, I

was writing about that and thought well we don't do interviews in Aboriginal culture we have discussions and talks.... We don't have focus groups we have circles" (in Kovach, 2006, p. 129). While researching material for "Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness," Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline (2000) used the talking circle as the basis for gathering knowledge and wisdom from students and community members:

Talking Circle as Methodology Enacted.
 Traditionally a Sacred ceremony
 a Gift from the Ancestors.
 A physical reality
 a Metaphysical experience.
 An egalitarian structure
 each voice acknowledged
 heard in turn.
 To choose words with care and thoughtfulness
 is to speak in a Sacred manner.
 We can each have our own Voice.
 speak our own Truth.
 Tell our own Story (p. 364).

Using the term "conversation" as opposed to "interview" seemed to not only describe the process much more succinctly, but it also seemed to be more respectful. I wanted the co-researchers to feel that they had the opportunity to not only guide the process, but to also have their own voice, to tell their own story.

The following questions guided the conversations, but were not presented in a semi-structured interview format:

- 1) How did you learn your language?
- 2) What do you know about our people's relationship with the land?
- 3) How did you come to know about our people's relationship with the land?
- 4) What does the language teach us about the land?
- 5) Why are we losing the Tahltan language?

- 6) Why is it important for our children to learn the Tahltan language?
- 7) Where should children be learning the language? At the school? At home? On the land?
- 8) What are they not learning about or missing out on by not learning our language?
- 9) What can be done now that the children are losing their Tahltan language?
- 10) How can a child learn to speak our Tahltan language?
- 11) In terms of Tahltan language revitalization, what has been done in the past?
- 12) What is being done now?
- 13) What still needs to be done?

After speaking with the three language teachers, I included the last three questions to focus more specifically on Tahltan language revitalization. As the different conversations progressed, in line with the Tahltan methodology that was chosen, I let the words and voices of the co-researchers guide the process.

For some of my conversations with Elders, it did not seem honourable or respectful to ask direct questions. I kept the questions in mind, but overall, I let the Elders guide the conversation – which is consistent with Tahltan and Indigenous ways. I let them know that my interest was in revitalizing our language and the conversation went from there. Anishinaabe researcher Vanessa Watts (2006) articulates her experience of interviewing Anishnaabe Elders and educators for her Master's research, which is consistent with my own experience.

Having experience in speaking with Anishnaabe elders and teachers, I have come to find that there are many occasions in which a direct answer to a question is seldom done. Often, I have had to reflect on stories and/or personal experiences

that have been shared by Anishnaabeg. In the research process, I chose not to confine the co-researchers and their way of speaking through highly specific questioning. My questions were specific to a degree in order to relate it to the aim of the research. However, it was also necessary to ask questions in a way that ensures that this way of sharing knowledge is respected and accommodating to the co-researchers in the interview process (p. 20-21).

As a Tahltan learner, I needed to listen, to learn what the co-researchers were telling me, and from there, glean the learnings regarding Tahltan language revitalization.

The voice of *Edōsdi*. While I wanted to ensure that the voices of the co-researchers came through loud and clear, I needed to make sure that my voice was also heard and not muffled. I am but one voice, out of many, for my people. Throughout this study, my voice has been present during conversations with co-researchers, as well as through my observations and thoughts, which I have presented in the form of poetry and narratives. As a co-researcher myself, hopefully I have allowed my voice to be part of the learnings.

Presentation of the Learnings

I have called the portion of my dissertation that deals with analysis and presentation of results as “presentation of the learnings.”

When working on my doctoral research proposal, I had initially decided to analyze data in a similar manner to what I had carried out for my Master’s research. I wanted to build on the procedures I had used for my Master’s research, which include the following steps that were also of an iterative nature:

- (1) Read through the transcripts from all interviews, listen to the audiotapes, and listen and watch videotapes numerous times, as well as go over my field notes/reflections of research process;
- (2) Make notes to get a sense of meaning;
- (3) Before interpreting the data and identifying themes, discuss with co-researchers what they have been sharing to get their function and meaning (e.g. go over transcripts, share audio and video footage), as well as sharing with them the notes I have come up with;
- (4) Identify common and unique themes by searching the data for patterns or regularities that represents specific concepts or major organizing ideas (including feedback from co-researchers in previous step);
- (5) Expand themes into categories and sub-categories as data is reviewed several times;
- (6) Discuss the different categories and sub-categories that have been identified, as well as any interpretations of the data, with co-researchers.
- (7) Reflect upon the analysis process outlined to ensure that the analysis is truly framed from a Tahltan perspective and consistent with a Tahltan approach to research, once again involving the co-researchers.

The following passage from Aboriginal scholar Carolyn Kenny's (2000) "A Sense of Place: Aboriginal Research as Ritual Practice," reflects how my PhD research analysis began. I scoped out the landscape, like *Tsesk'iyē Chō*, "Raven" (literally, "Big Crow" in Tahltan) would do. I listened to the audiotapes of the co-researchers to get a sense of their teachings, their stories and their words.

My skill as a researcher is apparent in my ability to express and suggest innovation and change from the collection of stories and words. Because of the volume of data, I must fly high to see the big picture. If I have done my research in a good way, I can see very clearly. When I teach research methods to my students at the university, I use Raven to help me describe the research process and the research experience. Raven flies. He surveys the land. He watches all of the berries. If he is using all of his ravenly skills, he is discerning. He knows which berries to pick and he knows how to organize them and categorize them into the right baskets. When I study transcripts of interviews, I feel a bit like Raven might feel. I wait for the words of the co-researchers to jump out to me from the page. I survey the land over and over again. I read the transcripts many times until I have a referential totality, a sense of the whole set of transcripts, all of the stories and words of the co-researchers (p. 147).

The transcription process was very comprehensive, in that I listened to the conversations many, many times, often just to be pulled back into the world of my people, our language, culture, and land. I first transcribed by hand all of the conversations into spiral notebooks, one notebook for each co-researcher. (Depending on the number and/or length of the conversations, I had several notebooks for certain co-researchers!) The conversation was transcribed on the right side of the notebook and I used the left side to record notes or to highlight certain sections of the conversation. Once all of the conversations were transcribed by hand, I typed them out. I listened to the tapes again while typing out the handwritten transcribed notes to make any changes or corrections. When typing out the hand transcribed notes, I could hear the voices of my

co-researchers as I typed. Not only had I listened to the tape recordings several times in order to transcribe them initially, and heard them first hand when originally speaking with co-researchers (of course, I was part of the original conversation!), I also listened to them when I felt that I needed to get back on track with my writing. Ceroni (2006) writes about the importance of listening to the voices of the co-researchers over and over again:

Transcribing the taped interviews by hand, playing and replaying them as I captured them in written text, I re-experienced each conversation, focusing more consciously on the texture of talk: pace and volume, cadence and rhythm, pauses, intonations, and inflections. This ear for texture expanded my understanding of how we were using language to shape meaning in our conversations. Though I was unaware at the time of the actual dissertation writing, the transcribing process enabled me to construct a kind of auditory mirror; as I heard my co-researchers' voices, they appeared in sharper focus, and I appeared in sharper focus in relation to them and to myself (p. 118).

Mishler (1986) also speaks to the importance of returning to, and listening to, the original recordings often:

...Investigators must keep in mind that speech is the intended object of study. At each stage of analysis and interpretation they must be wary of taking their own transcripts too seriously as *the* reality. Transcripts tend to take on a life of their own, especially given the effort, attention, and time involved in their preparation and analysis... (p. 48).

As I worked on the transcripts and listened to and/or "read" the voices of the co-researchers, thoughts, memories, words, turns of phrases, and images would come to me;

I would then jot those down in my field notebook. Later, I would write them into my research notes and I found that I would often write a narrative or a poem of sorts. I often wrote poetry as a young adult, but hadn't done that for years. I found that my thoughts wanted to be expressed in this manner once again, especially after being inspired by so many creative researchers.

I found that as I went through the conversations, I was learning so much about not only the language and how we need to revitalize it, but about myself. Because of that, I needed to include myself in the “data analysis” or the presentation of the learnings. As I listened to the voices of the people who were providing me with answers regarding Tahltan language revitalization, I found that they were becoming intertwined with my own stories or the stories of my grandparents/parents/other family members.

I did not want to separate the voices of the co-researchers into separate categories or coded themes. In the end, I did glean important points and categories from the information, knowledge, thoughts, and insights that were shared with me. However, I wanted their voices to be honoured. Graveline (2000) had a similar dilemma when trying to decide how to best represent what people had shared with her:

“Hundreds of journal pages
 hand-tabulated
 Dissected into relevant themes.
 Subjective data committed to linear form.
 Decontextualized from their life narratives.
 Partial Stories clipped and coded.
 I began to question: How can I possibly produce An “analysis”?
 How can I reduce
 25 delightfully diverse
 Self reflective monologues
 Into One document? (p. 363)

I chose to describe and interpret the teachings using a combination of strategies, with one being looking for answers from the conversations by using my *Tseskiye Chō* research skills. Once I had chosen what parts of the conversation to highlight, I listened to the conversations again to get the cadence and rhythm of speech in order to put the voices of the co-researchers into “poetic transcriptions” (Glesne, 1999, 2011).

When I was trying to find a way to honourably present the words of the co-researchers, I pored over many, many books and articles about research methods. I wanted to find a way to present the co-researchers’ words in a way that would not only honour what they had taught me, but that would ensure that their voices came through. Exploring different ways of representing data compels you “to think about the meanings and understandings, voices, and experiences present in the data.... Analytical ideas are developed and tried out in the process of writing and representing” (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, p. 109).

I found that while looking for ways to present the voices, and while I was grappling with how to ensure that I was carrying out valid and reliable research – for whom was I trying to ensure that my research was valid or reliable? – *Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi* provided a way for me to frame those thoughts. In an Indigenous context, as Wilson (2001) has stated,

Indigenous people need to do Indigenous research because we have the lifelong learning and relationship that goes with it. You are not just gaining information from people; you are sharing your information. You are analyzing and you are building ideas and relationships as well. Research is not just something that’s out

there: it's something that you're building for yourself and for your community (Wilson, 2001, p. 179).

In my research, I was trying to ensure that I was accountable to my people; that they could trust that the research that I was carrying out would be helpful, useful, relational, and transformative for our people. In a postmodern world, trustworthiness can pertain to checking with co-researchers about the ways we have represented them in our research writing (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). In my Master's thesis, I used triangulation to establish the trustworthiness of my study (Hopkins, 2002; Thompson, 2004), wherein trustworthiness dealt more with using several sources of data and/or multiple ways of collecting data, as opposed to being accountable to co-researchers in my study. I now wanted to find a way that would allow me to present different voices in different ways that moved past the type of trustworthiness that triangulation represented.

I read the words of Indigenous poets, such as Jeannette Armstrong – Okanagan (1991), Neal McLeod – Cree (2005), Shirley Kiju Kawi – Mi'kmaq (1997), and Ofelia Zepeda – Tohono O'odham (1995, 2008); and storytellers, such as Eden Robinson – Haisla (2001), Neal McLeod – Cree (2007), Drew Hayden Taylor – Ojibway (1998, 2010), and Thomas King – Cherokee (1993, 2003, 2005) to get a sense of the ways Indigenous peoples are creatively expressing ourselves in writing. I also read the works of Indigenous researchers, such as Fyre Jean Graveline – Métis (1995, 2000), Maggie Kovach – Cree (2006, 2009), Shawn Wilson – Cree (2004, 2008), Kathy Absolon – Anishinaabe (2008, 2011), Cam Willett – Cree (2007), and Four Arrows (Don Trent Jacobs) – Cherokee/Creek (2008), who have utilized creative writing styles, such as narrative and poetry, and I found that their texts engaged me in ways similar to listening

to stories told by my Elders. Their writing seemed to honour the knowledge and wisdom shared by the people whom they were learning from. Other non-Indigenous scholars have also wanted to present the voices of their co-researchers in a holistic and authentic way; not disjointed and separate. I found the titles of their texts inviting and I couldn't wait to read how they expressively intertwined research with art: *Method Meets Art: Arts-Based Research Practice* (Leavy, 2009), *A Methodology of the Heart: Evoking Academic & Daily Life* (Pelias, 2004), *The Ethnographic I: A Methodological Novel about Ethnography* (Ellis, 2004), *The Art and Science of Portraiture* (Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997), and *The Authority to Imagine: The Struggle toward Representation in Dissertation Writing* (Garman and Piantanida, 2006).

As opposed to the way in which I used triangulation in my Master's research, sociologist Laurel Richardson (1994) introduced the idea of crystallization as a model to replace triangulation in her classic article, *Writing: A Method of Inquiry*:

In postmodernist mixed-genre texts, we do not triangulate, we *crystallize*.... I propose that the central image for "validity" for postmodern texts is not the triangle – a rigid, fixed, two-dimensional object. Rather, the central imaginary is the crystal, which combines symmetry and substance with an infinite variety of shapes, substances, transmutations, multidimensionalities, and angles of approach. (p 522).

In the analogy used by Richardson, depending on the perspective or the way in which the triangle and crystals are viewed, due to the triangle's two-dimensional structure, there is really no way to gain new ways of viewing the triangle. However, with a three-dimensional crystal, which could be one of many different types of crystals, depending on

the perspective of the viewer, there are many ways that light can be refracted, many ways to gain a new perspective on what you are viewing depending on the angle of approach.

Laurel Ellingson (2009, 2011) extended Richardson's idea of crystallization and has presented it as a methodological framework or practice. What I found appealing about Ellingson's description of crystallization is that it includes more than one genre of writing or representation and does not exclude any particular methodology, except for research methodologies based in positivism (Ellingson, 2009).

Multiple ways of understanding and representing participants' experiences not only provide more description, but more points of connection through their angle of vision on a given topic. Crystallization enables a significant freedom to indulge in showing the "same" experience in the form of a poem, a live performance, an analytic commentary, and so on; covering the same ground from different angles illuminates a topic (Ellingson, 2009, p. 15).

I have used the concept of crystallization as a way to validate the many different ways in which I have presented the learnings, such as poetic transcriptions, poetry, stories, narratives, and songs. Along with Cree researcher Michael Hart's use of "physical manifestations of sacred experiences" (as cited in Kovach, 2006, p. 141) in his methodology, just reading Ellingson's book helped me to realize that I could use poetry to represent my voice; that I could use art, and pictures of that art, to provide a framework for my dissertation.

Poetic transcriptions. While I decided to present the words of the co-researchers using "poetic transcriptions," I journeyed through many different artistic ways that researchers have used to move the spoken voice to paper. This is not always an easy

thing to do; as Mischler (1991) makes the case that translating oral speech to the written word makes it a different being altogether. He states that researchers need to be cognizant of ensuring the accuracy of the translation of the oral dialogue as opposed to an accurate transcription. Ellingson (2009) points out that speech is different when it is written down: “We do not hear speech the same way we read it; we make allowances and select bits and pieces when we listen that jar us if encountered in writing. Retaining the *actual* dialogue in written form does not convey the *truth* of what happened in the (oral) moment” (p. 163). Anthropologist Dennis Tedlock (1991) felt that poetry was closer to speech than prose, and in a paper presented in 1973 at the yearly meeting of the Organization of American Historians, he wrote:

Nobody, whether in a
 literate society or not **speaks in prose**
 unless he is
 unless perhaps he is
 reading aloud
 from **written** prose
 and in the flattest possible voice.
 The **worst** thing about written prose is that there is no **silence** in it.
 (p. 113).

When reading the conversations of my co-researchers in standard prose, I knew that others reading the transcripts would not get the same sense of the co-researchers’ voices, unless they knew the individuals. I wanted to make sure that I captured as much of the cadence, flow of their speech, and so on when including their words in my dissertation. I wanted to set the words of the co-researchers in lines to reflect the rhythms of their speech, much like Wendy Wickwire had done with the words of Harry Robinson. In her work with Okanagan Storyteller, Harry Robinson, Wickwire (2004) found a way to convert the Elder’s oral stories to paper:

I searched for a presentational style to capture the nuance of the oral tradition – the emphasis on certain phrases, intentional repetition, and dramatic rhythms and pauses. I have, therefore, set the stories in lines which mirror as closely as possible Harry’s rhythms of speech. Harry’s stories are really performed events, rather than fixed objects on a page, and are conveyed much better by shorter lines rather than by the standard short story prose style, in which line breaks are only a typographic convention” (1989, p. 16).

I also took direction from Julie Cruikshank (1990) and her work with three Yukon Elders. Cruikshank wrote about this in *Life Lived Like a Story*, in which she wanted to ensure that the voices of the three Elders she worked with came through in written text.

Breaking lines to correspond with a pause by the narrator – and indicating longer pauses or topic changes by the addition of a blank line – seems to reproduce the emphasis and cadence of the spoken word more accurately than does conventional paragraphing. Native women who know storytellers and have read various versions of the text say that they find it easier to “hear” the speaker’s voice when reading this form (Cruikshank, 1990, p. 18).

Upon further searching, I came upon the writings of Laurel Richardson (1994) in which she has coined the term “evocative representations,” which is “a class of experimental genres that deploy literary devices to re-create lived experience and evoke emotional responses” (p. 521), of which narrative of the self, ethnographic fictional representations, ethnographic drama, and poetic representations are named as examples. Richardson (1994) states,

Writing up interviews as poems honors the speaker's pauses, repetitions, alliterations, narrative strategies, rhythms, and so on. Poetry may actually better represent the speaker than the practice of quoting snippets in prose. Further, poetry's rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, alliterations, meter, cadence, assonance, rhyme, and off-rhyme engage the listener's body, even when the mind resists and denies it (p. 522).

Richardson (1994) challenges readers to experiment with evocative representations and in regards to transforming an interview into a poetic representation, she suggests using only "the words, rhythms, figures of speech, breath points, pauses, syntax, and diction of the speaker" (p. 526).

Inspired by Laurel Richardson's writings, researcher Corrine Glesne (1999) came up with the term "poetic transcriptions," which is "the creation of poemlike compositions from the words of interviewees" (p. 202). I used poetic transcriptions (Glesne, 1999, 2011) to not only honour the voices of my co-researchers for what they have taught me, but to ensure that their voices came through clearly and succinctly when converting from their spoken to "written" voice. In converting the conversations of the co-researchers to poetic transcriptions, I tried to capture the rhythm, the cadence, and the pauses in their speech. In the words of Glesne (1999), "poetic transcription is similar to poetry in its form and use of concentrated language but it may not arrive at the artistic sensibilities of a good poem" (p. 187).

At this point, I will provide an example of how I converted a portion of a conversation I had with co-researcher Jenny Quock into a poetic transcription. I have presented Jenny's words almost verbatim, which is similar to version one of Glesne's

(2011) sample poetic transcription, in which she is “chronologically and linguistically faithful to the transcript” (p. 251). I have only made some minor changes to Jenny’s words, as per her wishes, and I have tried to make her words flow, to represent her way of speaking as much as it is possible when converting the spoken word to the written word.

Table 2: Creating a Poetic Transcription

Conversation	<p>JQ: I really want, I really love what Marie did, so the older people could understand. Like people that been go to college and university everywhere, they come up to us and make meeting and they talk their high language. We don’t know what they saying, we don’t even know. ‘Cause we never been to college or university and stuff like that. And some words they use are too powerful for us Elders to listen to. That’s why I’m really happy with Marie.</p> <p>JT: Yuh, yuh, for sure.</p> <p>JQ: It’s what kind of leader we want, that one could speak their language.</p>
Poetic Transcription	<p><i>I really want, I really love what Marie did so the older people could understand. Like people that have been to college and university everywhere. They come up to us and make meeting and they talk their high language. We don’t know what they’re saying. We don’t even know. ‘Cause we’ve never been to college or university and stuff like that. And some words they use are too powerful for us Elders to listen to. That’s why I say I’m really happy with Marie. It’s the kind of leader we want, that one who can speak their language.</i></p>

Poetry. I have written poetry throughout the dissertation as a way of interpreting not only my reflections of the teachings and learnings, but also as a way to express what I have experienced on my Tahltan journey. I have also included the poetry of other Indigenous poets, where appropriate. When writing his doctoral dissertation, Cree scholar Cam Willett (2007) used his own poetry to interpret his reflections of Indigenous students’ experiences in post-secondary institutions, as well as his own impressions.

Anishinaabe scholar Kathy Absolon (2008) also wrote poetry in her doctoral dissertation when describing Indigenous researchers' methodologies and experiences, as did Tommy Happynook (2010) when writing about his Nuučaanul people, leaders, and knowledge. Social anthropologist Tim Ingold (1993) explains poetry as a way in which "we stretch spoken words beyond the limits of normal utterance so that – like musical sounds – they become expressive in themselves" (p. 452). Poet Sir Philip Sidney has called poetry "a speaking picture: with this end, to teach and delight" (in Deutsch, 1974, p. 126). Researcher Patricia Leavy (2009) states, "In general, poems are highly attentive to space (which includes breath and pauses), using words sparsely in order to paint what I term a *feeling-picture*" (p. 64). In regards to the use of poetry by researchers, Leavy (2009) goes on to say, "Poetry as a research strategy challenges the fact-fiction dichotomy and offers a form for the evocative presentation of data." (p. 67).

Stories and narratives. In First Nations cultures, stories and narratives are oral traditions that have many similarities but also have elements that distinguish them from each other. In *BC First Nations Studies*, Ken Campbell, Charles Menzies, and Brent Peacock (2003) write that stories are set in a mythical time long ago and "communicate the moral traditions and knowledge of a people while telling of the origins of landscape and the human and animal inhabitants of the land" (p. 210). In contrast, narratives have a more tangible need and are used to transmit specific skills and knowledge from generation to generation and to record oral history (Campbell et al., 2003). After reading these definitions by Campbell, Menzies and Peacock, I still needed to find a way to make sense of these differences. In the past, I had used the two terms interchangeably, but have not always felt comfortable with my usage, as I did not know how to articulate those

differences. I came upon a blog posting whose focus was “The Difference Between Narrative and Story” and Mike Bonifer (2010), author of the website “GameChangers” offered this distinction: “Narrative: a flow of events connected to a theme. Story: the conscious ordering of those events to elicit meaning.” A response by Limor (2010), made it very clear to me:

Narrative is the playground of what will eventually materialize or not (depending on intention) into a story event – including the medium. Endless pieces of information, connections, sensations, etc. Plot is a choice taken in the narrative. A linear path of actions meeting details put in a certain way. Story is the emotional arch that rises in the listener – listening to the plot, using parts of the narrative, some of them not mentioned at all in the plot. (April 20, 2010).

Narrative (2001) has been defined as “a spoken or written account of connected events in the order of happening” (p. 965) while story (1998) has been defined as “the plot of a narrative or dramatic work” (p. 1345). Researcher Carolyn Lunsford Mears (2009) sees stories as “narratives of experience” (p. 14). From these definitions and perspectives, I see a narrative as having the potential to become a story, without it having to do so, while a story can stem from a narrative, but not necessarily in every circumstance.

Throughout this dissertation, I will be using both stories and narratives to present either stories told to me by my teachers or narratives to present my experiences, with the knowledge that there will be overlaps between the two modes of expression.

Songs. Songs are also a form of oral tradition, with knowledge and wisdom being passed down between generations through this medium. Tahltan songs that I have learned about, either from my teachers or from listening to and/or reading about the songs

recording by James Teit (in Thompson, 2007) in 1912 and 1915, cover almost every facet of Tahltan life. They range from potlatch songs, dance songs, love songs, hunting songs, songs about our people's relationship with plants and animals, gambling songs, mourning songs, children's songs, lullabies, to shaman's doctoring songs. And of course, a Tahltan dream song, which was given to me by one of my Elders, has played a key role in the way in which I have structured my dissertation.

ESTSIYE MEBADE ESGHANI'ĀN: "My Grandfather Gave Me His Mittens"

– Presentation of the Learnings



Figure 7. My Grandfather's Mittens.

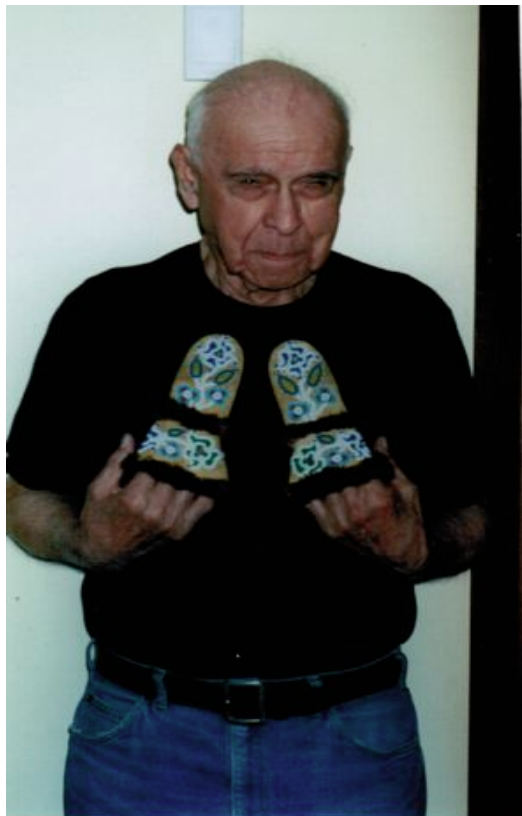


Figure 8. My Grandfather and his mittens.

The Tahltan phrase, *Estsiye mebade esghani 'ān*, translates as “My grandfather gave me his mittens.” My grandfather gave me a pair of mittens that his mother made for him before he was born. I cherish these mittens so much and felt the need to write a poem about Grandpa giving me such a gift and what those mittens symbolize to me, especially in regards to the revitalization of our Tahltan language.

My Grandfather's Cherished Mittens

*Tiny beads
so perfectly placed
painting the floral pattern
on the golden canvas.
Swirls of colour –
blues, reds, and greens,
whites, yellows, and silvers.
So tiny, so perfect.*

*Small pieces of tanned moose hide
adorned with beaver fur.
The inlaying of the thumbs
So intricately done
So tiny, so perfect.*

*Gold stitching
all done by hand.
So tiny, so perfect.
With love sewn into every stitch.*

*I gaze at my Grandpa's tiny mittens
and think about his mother
working on the mittens while she was carrying him.
So lovingly made for her second born
The son who would only know her for a fraction of his life.*

*My grandfather cherished those mittens
One of the few things that he had
To remind him of the mother
He barely remembered.
His mother, Istosta,
who passed away
when he was but four years old.
He could feel the love in those mittens,*

*and in his later years,
he showed his mittens off to as many people as he could.*

*He gave me those mittens about two years before he passed,
before he left us to be with his mother and our Ancestors.
Getting such a gift holds so much meaning.
So much love in those mittens.
So much meaning to the passing on of those mittens.
Grandpa knew that I would cherish them almost as much as him.*

*When I gaze at those mittens,
I often wonder...
what if my grandpa's mother had lived to raise him to adulthood?
How would my grandpa's life have been different?
He most definitely would have been fluent in our language
As his father allowed him to learn the language from Tahltan men
who worked on his ranch.
In his own words, he said,
"You know,
my mother died when I was four years old.
And what I learned is from the working men.
Tahltans.
If my mother had of lived,
I guess I would have spoke it fluently." (personal communication, December 29, 1999).
With the amazing memory he had for language and numbers
He would have been an amazing fluent speaker.
Even as a passive speaker,
he could recall words and phrases that others could not.*

*Grandpa often told me about how,
as a young boy,
his father would let Harry Carlick take him
to potlatches at Drytown,
a short walk from "downtown" Telegraph Creek.
Grandpa would talk about Granny's Uncle Frank,
and how he would open the potlatches by speaking
in the Nisga'a, Tlingit, and Kaska languages
even before he would speak in Tahltan,
regardless if people from those Nations were present.
Grandpa would tell me that what Uncle Frank did
showed how much respect our Tahltan people had,
not only for other Nations,
but for their languages as well.*

*But I wonder...
Even if Grandpa had been a fluent speaker of Tahltan,*

*would he have taught his children?
I would like to think that he would have.
But not many people of my mother's generation
learned to speak Tahltan fluently.
Even with parents who were fluent speakers,
as our people were made to feel ashamed of our language
mainly due to colonization, assimilation, acculturation.*

*The mittens symbolize so much to me...
The knowledge and wisdom of our Ancestors.
The love between generations.
The slipping away of our language.
And the valiant effort our people need to continue to make
in order to revitalize our language.
(Edōsdi)*

To me, these mittens symbolize my connection to my Ancestors and our language. They also symbolize my hopes and dreams regarding the revitalization of the Tahltan language, and because of this, I have chosen to use them as a physical manifestation of my Tahltan journey dealing specifically with Tahltan language revitalization.

I have fashioned my research questions around the revitalization of the Tahltan language and I am using them to organize the way in which the learnings are presented in the dissertation. The three questions focus not only on the ways we have been, and need to continue, revitalizing the Tahltan language, but also on the positive effects language revitalization can have on the lives of my people. The answers to these research questions have come from conversations with the co-researchers in my study, my teachers, scholars who have worked with our Tahltan communities, other Indigenous community language revitalization experts, and international language revitalization scholars.

How Can Tahltan Language Revitalization Positively Affect the Lives of My People?

Who we are as Tahltan: Connection to our language, our land, our

Ancestors. When I began my doctoral research, I was looking to document, preserve, learn, and pass on cultural knowledge and wisdom. My co-researchers were clear that language was an essential part of identity and strong self-esteem as a Tahltan person. From speaking with the co-researchers and my teachers, I was able to learn more about how we identify ourselves through language, and land, and our connection to our Ancestors. These were some of the responses to the question, “Why is it important for our children to learn the Tahltan language?”:

*It is important for our children
to learn the Tahltan language
because it is who they are,
where they come from
and it needs to be passed down from this generation to the next.
If they don't have their language
how can they be proud of who they are?
Without our language and culture,
who are we as a people?
(Loretta Quock-Sort).*

*To get a sense of yourself as a Native person
you need something to show that you are a Tahltan,
you know?
It tells you who you are.
(Janet Vance).*

*I really try to instill this in the kids
that it's a part of you.
It's who you are.
You can say that “I'm Tahltan” over and over again.
You can show this little 2 by 3 inch [status] card saying that you're Tahltan.
But when you think about it,
when you're my age or a little older,
you're going to ask yourself,
“What do I know about Tahltan?
What do I even know about the language?”*

*That's when your answer is going to be there, right there.
You need your language.
You need your culture to say who you are.
(Angela Dennis).*

*When I started learning Tahltan,
it was a gateway into a Tahltan mindset life way
that you don't get as clearly if you don't have the language.
And so by not learning our language and stuff,
I think the things that we really miss out on is
not being as complete a Tahltan as we could be.
(David Rattray).*

*I feel that it is important for our children to know
because this is who we are,
people of the land,
our roots are instilled here.
And the more we detach from it,
the more we lose sight of the strong Nation that we come from.
I want my children to know who we are and be proud of it.
Our Ancestors have walked this land and kept it intact
so that our children could see the beauty of our people.
Our language is one of many great aspects of being Tahltan,
it belongs to us,
it is who we are.
(Sonia Dennis).*

Language teacher Sonia Dennis makes a clear connection between our language, our land, and our Ancestors. Her words, “*our roots are instilled here*” and “*Our Ancestors have walked this land*” support the Tahltan worldview, *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*, “Our Ancestors are in us” or more literally, “our roots are from that village.” Over and over again, the co-researchers spoke to me about who we are as Tahltan and how we are tied to our language and our land, and our connection to our Ancestors. From what I have learned, our land is intrinsically tied to our language, and from that stems our culture and worldviews, and the relationships that we have with all the beings that we share the land with. As stated previously, Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000) claims that language is “a window onto ways of knowing the world” and is also “a way of

interacting in the world” (p. 237). Regarding the Mi’kmaw language, Aboriginal scholars Battiste and Henderson (2000) claim that

the Mi’kmaw language is more than just a knowledge base, it is essential for the survival of the Mi’kmaq. It reflects the Mi’kmaw philosophy of how we shall live with one another, how we shall treat each other, and how the world fits together (p. 50).

Different landscapes with different languages most often lead to diverse worldviews. If different languages generate meaning in distinct ways, this would lead to various ways of existing in the world and viewing the world (Chamberlin, 2004). In a statement by the National Indian Brotherhood (1972), which I make reference to earlier in the rationale, the connection between language and worldview is evident:

Language is the outward expression of an accumulation of learning and experience shared by a group of people over centuries of development. It is not simply a vocal symbol; it is a dynamic force, which shapes the way a man looks at the world, his thinking about the world and his philosophy of life. Knowing his maternal language helps a man to know himself; being proud of his language helps a man to be proud of himself (p. 14-15).

Our language also gives us pride in our people and ourselves – our identity is tied to our language. Co-researchers also spoke about our identity being linked to our land. When speaking with David Rattray, I asked him if he felt that there was a connection to our land with our Tahltan language.

*There used to be.
But I’ve seen that totally fragmented now.
And I remember one Elder telling me,
“We don’t own the land, the land owns us.”*

*And that's what a lot of the Elders tried to teach me,
was the dichotomy is a western point of view.
And so when that old guy said,
"We don't own the land, the land owns us,"
that's what I think he was trying to tell me was
we're one with it.
We can't separate it either.
(David Rattray).*

When asked what the language teaches us about the land, Tahltan educator Carolyn

Doody stated,

*Interdependency,
the land provides for us and in turn we take care of it.
Our language teaches us stories through place names,
our history and about the lives of our Ancestors.
(Carolyn Doody).*

Curtis Rattray added,

*The land allows you to experience our stories,
and our culture, and our beliefs, and our values.
And being out on the land allows those to be reinforced
and to experience it.
And we have our stories that talk about that relationship to the land,
you know why it's important to be respectful
and respect plants and the animals
and the land and the water.
And as you get older, you start to accept those teachings, more and more.
You start to base your belief systems
and the way you conduct yourself in that way.
As a young person, you're just, you do it,
because you're trained to do it.
You're just following orders and expected to do it.
But as you get older,
you start to have a better understanding
of why you do things a certain way.
As you get older,
you have more collections of experiences and explanations of things
and you engage in more and more detailed conversations with people about it.
There are Tahltan concepts, words,
that capture those types of concepts and practices.
(Curtis Rattray).*

In the introduction of the dissertation, I introduced myself in my Tahltan language. My Elders have taught me to introduce myself by stating my Tahltan name, my clan and crest, and by identifying the land and territory to which I belong. My Tahltan name, *Edōsdi*, is a *Tsesk'iye* (Crow) name and belongs specifically to the *Tlabānotine* territory, one of three Crow territories. My name connects me directly to the land. Having a name tied to a particular territory is a common practice amongst many Northwest Coast cultures. In regards to Stó:lō names, Bierwert (1986) has argued that they are “extensions of individuals, particularly the individual’s relationship with what he or she ‘belongs to’” (p. 512). The Coast Salish people also connect themselves to the land through names, which is highlighted in a story told to Brian Thom by Coast Salish Elder Willie Seymour. Upon hearing the story, Thom (2005) surmised, “The story of Willie’s father’s Indian name weaves together the notion that Indian names connect people to place. His telling of the story highlights the tie between property in names and associations with places” (p. 211). By using one word, one name, a First Nations person can be tied intrinsically to a place, which underscores a powerful and sacred relationship that our people have with the land. Qwul’sih’yah’maht (2005) of the Coast Salish Nation writes,

Behind a name is history – it brings forward with it the Ancestors of the past who shared that name, where they were from; they may bring songs, dances, or masks and other important messages. These teachings are passed along to the ones who today carry those names (p. 241).

Cree scholar Neil McLeod (2005) also writes eloquently about the importance of names:

Names mark memory and paths of experience. Names are like rivers that run deep in our souls. Words and names make us old in sound and give us a place, give us shreds of light, that help us give form to the moment of our birth (p. 9).

In regard to introductions, the Maori people of New Zealand place a similar importance to connecting oneself to the land, as pointed out by Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Te Rina Smith, in an interview with Marie Battiste, Lynne Bell, and Len Findlay (2002):

In our culture we begin by introducing ourselves by naming our geography, where we come from, then our ancestral lines, and then finally we name the people. In ancient times there was no need to know your name; that introduction was sufficient. But in modern times I would say, "My name is Linda." It is important to begin in this manner as a way of identifying who we are, where we are from, and how we connect to everybody else (p. 169).

An example of the relationship my people have with the land can be found in the words of Tahltan Elder, Rosie Dennis. At a Tahltan Elders' conference in the early 1990s, she talked about what she would say to government officials involved in land claim negotiations with our people:

If I'm with this guy they ask for land,
I'll tell him,
"You guys got your grandpa's hotel and camping place? You name it."
And I got my grandma and my grandpa's hotel tree.
The biggest tree with the biggest branches.
That's their camping place.
And I know the name of it.
My grandma, my grandpa's moccasins scattered all over.
And we've got names for every mountain,
every creek,
every camping place,
every lake,

everything, we got name for it.
(personal communication, June 1992).

Rosie Dennis's words point to the importance Tahltan people place on actually living on the land in order to have a relationship with the land and to have the right to name it. She poignantly brings this home when making reference to the "Queen" trying to own our land, a reference to Crown Land, public land "owned" by the federal and/or provincial governments.

Where's that Queen's camping place?
Show me where that Queen been camping.
Trying to own our country.
Show me where Queen's place
and where she give name to the river,
to the mountain like what we do
(personal communication, June 1992).

In *If This is your land, where are your stories?*, J. Edward Chamberlin (2004) tells how Australian Aboriginal Elder Charlie Tjungurrayi relayed to him an incident in which he greeted strangers to his land: "I tell'im, you don't belonga this country! You got no *tulku!* *Tjukurrpa!* Only I got'em *tulku*. We bin live along this country. We know this country. I don't know where you come. You not boss for this place!" (p. 13).

Chamberlin (2004) goes on to explain what the two Pintupi words mean:

Tulku and *tjukurrpa* translate roughly as "song" and "dreaming," and together they represent all that is most significant about the relationship between aboriginal people and the land, between the past and the present, and between one and another. They are the beginning of an answer to the question "If this is your land, where are your stories?" (p. 14)

Like Tahltan Elder Rosie Dennis, Charlie Tjungurrayi points out the importance to Indigenous peoples of knowing a place and how naming a place means having a relationship with the land and showing respect for the land.

Another way of connecting the land to language is to make a connection to the relationship we have with animals who we share our land with. In the words of his grandfather, Grand Chief Mike Mitchell of Akwesasne (Mohawk Nation) uses the animal world and their languages as a way to explain how detrimental it would be to lose our Aboriginal languages.

What would happen to the Creator's law if the robin couldn't sing its song anymore? We would feel bad: We would understand that something snapped in nature's law. What would happen if you saw a robin and you heard a different song, if it was singing the song of the sea gull? You would say, "Robin, that's not your language; that's not your song" (as cited in Kirkness, 2002, p. 18).

Similarly, Wade Davis (2009), anthropologist and ethnobotanist, has spoken about the loss of Indigenous languages, comparing it to the loss of a biological species:

A language, of course, is not merely a set of grammatical rules or a vocabulary. It is a flash of the human spirit, the vehicle by which the soul of each particular culture comes into the material world. Every language is an old-growth forest of the mind, a watershed of thought, an ecosystem of spiritual possibilities (p. 3).

How have we come to this point in time in which we are losing our Tahltan language? From what I have outlined, our language connects us to our land, our Ancestors, and is part of our identity – who we are as Tahltan people. If we are connected to our language, our land, and our Ancestors, we have a better sense of whom

we are as a people, leading to better health and overall wellbeing. In regards to what we miss out on when we don't know our language, Curtis Rattray states:

*I think what we're missing is
the way our Ancestors would express our view of the world,
our worldview,
our values and beliefs.
That's what we're missing.
We're missing that very specific expression of that.
And when we describe or talk
about our beliefs and values and experiences in English,
we're missing the full complete picture.
So it has an impact on that part of our culture.
(Curtis Rattray).*

Aboriginal scholar Verna Kirkness (2002) points out that besides knowing how our languages can positively affect our lives, we also need to know of our oppression in regards to language. Before answering Research Question Three, I would like to provide some background into how we have come to the place in which we need to revitalize our Tahltan language, as well as other Aboriginal languages in Canada.

Survival of Aboriginal languages in Canada. Before the arrival of the newcomers two centuries ago, there were approximately 450 Aboriginal languages and dialects flourishing in the land that was to become Canada (Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages, 1990). After contact, it wasn't long before Aboriginal languages were not being spoken or taught to the younger generations, with at least ten Aboriginal languages becoming extinct in the last century alone (Norris, 1998), and only approximately 60 of these languages still being spoken in Canada (Statistics Canada, 2008; Kirkness, 1998, Norris, 1998).

Okanagan scholar Jeannette Armstrong (1991) poignantly writes about being forced to speak the English language in her poem, "Threads of Old Memory."

Speaking to newcomers in their language is dangerous
 for when I speak
 history is a dreamer
 empowering thought
 from which I awaken the imaginings of the past
 bringing the sweep and surge of meaning
 coming from a place
 rooted in the memory of loss
 experienced in ceremonies
 wrenched from the minds of a people
 whose language spoke only harmony
 through a language
 meant to overpower
 to overtake
 in skillfully crafted words
 moving towards surrender
 leaving in its swirling wake
 only those songs
 hidden
 cherished
 protected
 the secret singing of which
 I glimpse through bewildered eyes
 An old lost world
 of astounding beauty
 (p. 58).

What caused this “loss” of so many languages in a relatively short period of time?

Anishinaabe researcher Kathy Absolon makes a powerful statement about how our languages were not so much lost, as they were attacked:

I started going to the ceremonies and started hearing over, and over, and over
 again the message we have to learn our language, that our culture is in our
 language. And if we lose our language, an important piece of who we are is gone
 as well. It’s not even if we lose our language, we haven’t lost anything, it’s not
 like we misplaced it. Our language was attacked; it was exterminated... There
 was a political agenda to exterminate our language, our culture, and our

connections to the land, and to each other (as cited in Pitawanakwat, 2009, p. 234).

This systematic annihilation of Aboriginal languages began with colonization and with Canada's political, social, religious, and education institutions whose goal was to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into mainstream society (MacMillan, 1998; Norris, 2011). By far, one of the most effective and destructive tools used for assimilation was the enforced education system, in which children were separated from their families and taken to residential schools in which they were taught the values, culture, and language of the colonizing body. At these schools, students learned only the most basic academic and practical skills. They attended classes for half of the day and for the other half, worked performing tasks such as laundry, cleaning, and preparing food (Campbell et al., 2003). Because the main reason for this type of school was assimilation, children were not permitted to speak their Aboriginal languages, and were punished, sometimes severely, if they did. Colonizing powers were aware of the power of language to transmit culture, so by not allowing children to speak their mother tongue, they were not only attempting to break that tie to the children's culture, they were also imposing the dominant culture on the children through the English language (Campbell et al., 2003). Co-researcher Janet Vance spoke about the impact government policies had on our people:

*They tried to change us.
They want us to be like them, you know.
They didn't want our ways,
they wanted Indians to be like them.
But they couldn't change us, you know?
That's why they did that to all the schools, I think.
Even the residential schools.
(Janet Vance)*

Linguist Marianne Ignace (1998) states that while many of the Aboriginal people who were fluent in their Aboriginal language when they attended residential schools did not entirely lose their ability to speak their language, the residential school experience had a major impact on future generations and efforts to revitalize Aboriginal languages. Two of the consequences were that the children of the residential school survivors were raised speaking English and did not learn their people's language and that many residential school survivors carried the shame and humiliation for speaking their languages for the rest of their lives. In her Master's thesis, *The Experience of Northern Secwepemc Losing and Relearning Their Language*, Amy Sandy (2005) states that fluent speakers of *Secwepemctsin* who attended residential school still feel shame in regards to speaking their language and that many never try to speak it or relearn it. "As a result, there is a tremendous amount of emotional and psychological trauma and baggage from which Indians have to heal and continue to overcome as they try to speak their language" (p. 34).

As a fluent speaker of Tahltan, Janet Vance understands not only feeling ashamed to speak the Tahltan language, but also feeling afraid to speak her language. She spoke about feeling confused when she first went to school at the age of six:

*It was my first language until I went to school.
I was six years old
and me and my sister went to school at the same time
and we weren't allowed to speak our language.
So that's how we lost most of it, eh?
I used to go home and I'm so proud I learned English.
Talked to my grandparents in English
and Grandpa got mad at me.
And when I got to school and speak my language,
the teachers get mad at me.
So it was little bit confusing, you know?
I just think, "What am I doing wrong? I can't do nothing right!"*

*So that's how it all started.
 And it's how our language been lost, you know?
 The government is responsible for that.
 So when you're a kid, you don't realize,
 but now you know, you know?
 When you're a kid, you get scared, scared to say anything.
 (Janet Vance).*

Co-researcher Curtis Rattray described a number of factors related to the “loss” of our

Tahltan language, including the shaming aspect:

*I think there's a number of things that are causing it,
 but the number one reason is just usage.
 And people just aren't using it.
 And why they're not,
 why people aren't using the language
 I think has a lot to do with
 our collective schooling experience in the western system.
 Whether it's public school
 or day care
 or day school like what happened in Iskut,
 or Residential schools.
 It's that teaching method that's being used where,
 when the students are incorrect,
 there is a shaming process that goes on.
 The worst was in residential schools.
 And like in the past,
 where I think that type of teaching technique
 was the dominant teaching theory.
 And it created this lack of motivation to use our language.
 And to teach our language.
 And I think the racism
 that was justified through social Darwinism
 has a lot of our people believing that our language and culture
 are no longer relevant and inferior.
 And as a result
 that's part of the reason why there's –
 the usage has gone down.
 (Curtis Rattray).*

While the assimilation policies were being carried out via the education system, the law enforcement system was also involved in these tactics. Janet Vance recalls an

incident from her childhood involving two Elders speaking Tahltan and an RCMP officer:

*It was against the law.
 'Cause they threatened these old ladies,
 they don't know English,
 they only talk their language on the street.
 And then this RCMP walked up to them and told them that
 "If you don't quit speaking your language on the street,
 I'm going to throw you in jail."
 So that was against the law.
 That's how our language went, you know?
 'Cause people had no pride and they had no self [esteem].
 But anyway, they think it was bad, the language.
 That's the way I look at it.
 And when I hear people,
 those old people talking
 I just wanted them to quit because I thought it was wrong.
 It was what I was taught and I didn't like it,
 I was afraid for them.
 (Janet Vance).*

Co-researcher Patrick Carlick recalls a similar story from his childhood:

*'Cause Emma Brown,
 your grandpa's cousin,
 she told us the policeman come around and told them,
 "Don't you speak your language to your kids.
 Speak as much as you can English."
 (Patrick Carlick).*

As the Tahltan language teacher at the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek, co-researcher Pauline Hawkins has witnessed firsthand the intergenerational transmission of shame.

*It started there,
 with a lot of the people going to residential schools.
 In some cases,
 I think that maybe some people are ashamed.
 And I think there's a lot of misconceptions about,
 about being Tahltan or being non-Native.
 And I think that a lot of young people must get kind of caught in that.
 (Pauline Hawkins).*

This shame and fear has been passed on to successive generations and there is “baggage” associated not only with our language, but also about who we are as a people. As Pauline Hawkins has noted, there seemed to be a stigma attached to being “Tahltan” or “Native” for many Tahltans that has led to poor self-esteem and poor self-image. David Rattray talked about this in regards to how coming from stressed homes affects our children and their concept of our language, and by extension, who we are as a people.

*But the kids,
and I'm going to keep getting stuck on this.
Many, not all,
many of the kids come from stressed homes.
As a result, White kids,
when they took the language,
they learned it better than the Tahltan kids.
That's just so constant,
and two, three reasons for it.
One reason is the non-Aboriginal kids are interested in it.
Another reason is they've got a foundation in English,
so moving into another language is easier.
Whereas we have a dialect, which makes it harder.
And there's a stigma on the language.
When you check it out,
there's a stigma that exists that we don't want to talk about.
Even my grandfather,
it wasn't until he was old that he spoke Tahltan.
(David Rattray).*

In regards to the three reasons that David Rattray has listed for why “White” children learn the Tahltan language better than Tahltan children, one and three deal specifically with the shame and fear that has been passed down from previous generations. Specific to the second reason that David stated, it is in reference to our children speaking a dialect of English, which has often been referred to as Indian, Aboriginal, Indigenous, or First Nations English (Wiltse, 2011) that is “the result of the influence of the Indigenous language or mother tongue on the English language” (p. 54). While David states that

moving from Standard English to another language is easier than moving from a dialect of English, such as Tahltan English, to another language, Ball and Bernhardt (2008) explain that First Nations English dialects may indeed play an important part in language revitalization and in the revival of our identities. Because First Nations English dialects resonate or provide our ears with a “picture” of what endangered languages sound like, “fluency in the First Nations English dialect can provide speakers who want to learn or re-learn an ancestral language an easier point of entry” (p. 575).

When I asked Tahltan Elder and teacher Henry Quock why our children weren’t learning our languages, he responded,

Well, nobody teach them.
 You try to teach kids
 and they just laugh and say they don’t,
 “We don’t want to talk that language.”
 (personal communication, September 2008).

Over the years, I have heard from many of my people about how the “white kids” learn our language better than our own children. This always upset me in that I knew our children were just as smart as any other group of children. But from this anecdotal evidence, why weren’t some of our children interested in learning our language? Why were they not excelling at learning our language?

In her Master’s research, Sandy (2005) found that not only were students who returned from residential school embarrassed or afraid to speak their *Secwepemctsin* language, they took on the role of the oppressor towards their own people.

Both at the mission and when they returned home, students began shaming one another for making mistakes in *Secwepemctsin*. Both co-researchers in Group 1

became embarrassed and afraid to speak their language because they were afraid of being humiliated by their peers or Elders (p. 79).

Celia Haig-Brown (1988) has called this type of public humiliation a form of indoctrination in which the practices of the oppressors continue on long after the oppressed are no longer under their control. David Rattray poignantly gives an example about how the indoctrination process is alive and well in our Tahltan communities.

*When the kids would learn
how to say a word in Tahltan in school
they would have a bit of mispronunciation sometime.
And it was unreal.
Whenever I saw,
every interaction I saw where a kid used Tahltan
and out in the community
an older person would,
an Elder would say,
in this tone of voice,
“That’s not how it’s said!”
And then they tell them how to say it properly,
while the kid just clams up, shuts up.
You just watch them fade away because of the pain.
No one, no one,
and I mean no one,
I never saw them,
there may have been some,
but every interaction I saw,
the adults put down the kid
for trying to say the word
because they said it incorrectly.
(David Rattray).*

When I asked David why he felt that fluent speakers would respond to the children in that way, David answered,

*Because they’re full of pain
and when they see someone doing something wrong,
it gives them some joy.
(David Rattray).*

When asked why we are losing our language, Tahltan Educator Carolyn Doody stated,

*Because a lot of people who know the language
do not have opportunity to share it.*
(Carolyn Doody).

In addition, besides this shame and fear of speaking their languages, residential school survivors often wanted to save their children from the punishment and negative effects that they suffered (Haig-Brown, 1988). A Musqueam woman whose mother attended residential school recounts the reasons she wasn't taught her language:

The language before I went to school was English. We never got taught the [Indian] language... They all spoke to us in English. It mainly had to do with boarding school. They chose not to teach us Indian, the Indian language.

Because they got punished so severely for speaking the language, they didn't want us to go through the same punishment. So my Mother said she chose not to teach us any Indian language, so that there was no way we were going to get punished at all (as cited in Shaw, 2001, p. 42).

Well-intentioned parents and educators often felt that it would be in the best interest of children to learn only English so that they would do better in school and fit into the dominant society (Shaw, 2001). Research conducted over a century ago on the effects of bilingualism on immigrant children paralleled the thought process that learning two languages was not in the best interest of children. Psychologist G. G. Thompson, in summarizing the literature in 1952, stated:

There can be no doubt that the child reared in a bilingual environment is handicapped in his language growth. One can debate the issue as to whether speech facility in two languages is worth the consequent retardation in the common language of the realm (as cited in Hakuta and Garcia, 1989, p. 375).

Studies in the last few decades now suggest that higher levels of bilingualism are associated with higher levels of cognitive development (Diaz, 1983), which suggest that learning Tahltan along with English would not have been detrimental at all to our people, but would have actually been beneficial to our children.

From the beginning of these assimilation policies, our people have been assaulted with external messages about not only the worthlessness of our languages and cultures, but about ourselves, so much so that we have internalized these messages and perpetuated these practices upon ourselves (Shaw, 2001; Emerson, 2003; Sandy, 2005). Navajo scholar Larry Emerson (2003) writes about how this has affected his people.

Decades of colonial oppression and assault have created severe internal conflict and self-doubt amongst the Diné. We have become dispassionate towards ourselves. These oppressions have created internal shameful perceptions as they disrupt our everyday life. Alienation caused by colonialism has created a moral crisis and cultural contradiction in our communities. Many times, we are uncritical regarding colonialism's historical, political, and cultural beginnings and its impact on our daily lives. This phenomenon in of itself is an effect of colonial oppression (p. 9).

A major finding in Sandy's (2005) research was that "punishment, instilling fear, and shaming, has the power to silence language" (p. ii). While humiliation began with government officials and authority figures in regards to colonization and assimilation policies, the shaming continued from our own people, which perpetuated the shame and fear of speaking our languages (Sandy, 2005). McIvor (2005) stated a similar point in her Master's thesis, *Building the Nests: Indigenous Language Revitalization in Canada*

Through Early Childhood Immersion Programs: “Language loss does not have to be personally experienced within one’s lifetime for one to feel its effects. Especially in the case of First Nations communities, the residual effects of language loss are passed down through the generations” (p. 3).

Revisiting what Verna Kirkness (2002) has stated, we have gone over why we have lost our languages due to oppression, but we now need to examine how our languages can positively affect our lives.

Language is what gives us our identity and expresses our unique worldview.

Language is the ultimate symbol of belonging; it is through language that culture is shared and transmitted. If we lose our language, we are essentially losing a way of life, a way of thought, a way of valuing and a particular human reality (p. 18).

Restating what Tahltan language teacher Sonia Dennis has said,

*I want my children to know who we are and be proud of it.
Our Ancestors have walked this land and kept it intact
so that our children could see the beauty of our people.
Our language is one of many great aspects of being Tahltan,
it belongs to us,
it is who we are.
(Sonia Dennis).*

Cultural identity and self-esteem are tied to knowing our Aboriginal languages (Fishman, 1991; Stiles, 1997; Wong Fillmore, 1996). Knowing our languages, which are interconnected with our culture and our people’s connection to our land, helps our people to gain pride and confidence in who we are (Jacobs, 1998). As well, the immersion of children in the language of their people can reverse negative self-identity and self-esteem (Jacobs, 1998). It is vital that our people know why our languages are important to who

we are as a people, and to know the intricate connections between language, culture, worldview, and our Ancestors.

Language revitalization and healing. My conversation with Tahltan educator David Rattray took my research down a path exploring the connection between language revitalization and healing:

*There's one point
that I wanna hit really hard with you
so that it's really clear,
and that's our pain.
When we're born,
we don't have obviously life experiences.
But with the kids that I work with,
by the time they hit about ten years old,
they make a promise to themselves.
They're not going to drink,
do drugs, whatever
and fight or whatever.
But by the time these kids hit teenagers,
most of them,
not all,
are in to some sort of addiction.
And eventually,
I think in their twenties,
wherever they begin to focus more on their healing journey.
And what I see
is when they're going through their healing journey,
I watch lots of our people,
including almost all of our leaders,
stay stuck on that part of their journey.
When they get to the place
where their past doesn't hurt them anymore,
or where their past hits them
and they can clean it up really quickly
without hurting other people or themselves,
that's really rare.
So I watch people oscillate back and forth on this healing journey
where sometimes they can make phenomenal good decisions.
And other times,
they're going to make poor decisions
because of pain from their past.
Now,*

*a lot of the decision-making comes unconsciously
because they get mad.*

*And what I see
when we talk about language,
that's the kind of thing that's going to impede big time.
That, to me,
is a barrier for language revitalization.
(David Rattray).*

Curtis Rattray also made the connection between language revitalization and healing, as well as social development.

*Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority has kind of taken on part of that role
of language revitalization,
where language revitalization is worked into
social development programming like traditional parenting.
Because people are linking language revitalization to healing,
and healing and social development is a mandate
of Tahltan Health.*

*And the Tahltan Language Authority needs to take the position also
that language revitalization is integral to our healing and social development.
It's also integral to our land claims
and Aboriginal rights and title issues.
(Curtis Rattray).*

While David Rattray and Curtis Rattray were the only co-researchers who focused on the relationship between language revitalization and healing, all of the co-researchers mentioned, in one way or another, the legacy of colonization and assimilation policies, how they have detrimentally affected our people in regards to our language, and the need to revitalize our language. Co-researcher Janet Vance spoke about how she was afraid when her Elders spoke the Tahltan language on the street due to threats by law enforcement, and how such fear and intimidation had an affect on our people's pride and self-esteem:

*That's how our language went, you know?
'Cause people had no pride and they had no self-esteem.*

They think it was bad, the language.

She then stated why it is important for our people to learn our language:

*Well, to get a sense of yourself, you know.
As a Native person,
you need something to show that you are a Tahltan.
It tells you who you are.
(Janet Vance).*

Language teacher Pauline Hawkins feels that our language loss began with many of our people attending residential schools, with the language not being passed on to successive generations, and how that has affected our young people today. In regards to healing and its relationship to physical health, Jenny Quock stated:

*Look, if you don't heal yourself,
if you got a bad, bad, really bad background,
and you don't heal yourself,
that's when it turns into a germ,
disease, cancer and everything.
You gotta clean up your act,
clean yourself, your soul,
and start loving and love everybody.
And that way you really get along with people
if you want to be a leader or whatever.*

*I say, people gotta get healed...
(Jenny Quock).*

David Rattray strongly feels that without healing, that the pain in our Tahltan communities will be an impediment to Tahltan language revitalization.

*The amount of emotional pain that exists is so horrific
that I personally,
when we talk about language revitalization,
we have to factor in a huge healing component.*

*I believe you need to have a huge focus on healing
if you're going to revitalize the language.
Language is too difficult to learn and use,
with all the pain elements that flow through our world.*

*There is so much pain in our Nation
that language revitalization,
while it gets a lot of verbal –
“we’ve got to do it,”
when you sit back
and watch them
try to implement it,
it’s extremely difficult
because there’s too much pain in our communities.
(David Rattray).*

David has worked as a classroom teacher, a school administrator, and as a school counsellor for most of his educational career. He worked with our children in our territory for almost two decades, so he has witnessed first hand the pain and suffering our people have endured due to colonization and assimilation policies. As I previously described, colonization and assimilation policies in Canada have led to the loss of Aboriginal languages. The indoctrination of these policies has also led to the shame and fear that was perpetrated upon our peoples in the school system and in social, political, economic and other systems. This loss of self-esteem and devaluation of our languages and cultures has caused many social problems, which has led to a need for healing. Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran (1995) have called what our people have suffered a “soul wound.”

The core of Native American awareness was the place where the soul wound occurred. This core essence is the fabric of soul and it is from this essence that mythology, dreams, and culture emerge. Once the core from which soul emerges is wounded, then all of the emerging mythology and dreams of a people reflect the wound. The manifestations of such a wound are then embodied by the tremendous suffering that the people have undergone since the collective soul

wound was inflicted half a millennium ago. Some of the diseases and problems that Native Americans suffer are a direct result of the soul wound (p. 45).

This collective wounding of our souls, or soul wounding, has become the legacy of colonialism and assimilation (Episkenew, 2009). Cherokee writer, activist, and performer Qwo-Li Driskill (2008) refers to colonization as a “kinesthetic wounding.”

Colonization is a kinesthetic reality: it is an act done by bodies and felt by other bodies. Violence is not an intellectual knowledge, but rather one that is known because of the damage done to our skin, flesh, muscles, bones and spirits. It is both our homelands and our bodies that are violated through colonization.

If colonization is kinesthetic wounding, then decolonization is a kinesthetic healing. We carry the wounds of the past in our bodies, and it is through our bodies that we find ways to mend them and continue our lifeways. We must heal historic trauma in order to help heal our nations and homelands. It is in our bodies – and as bodies – that we tell our stories and understand what it means to be Native people enacting decolonization and continuance (Driskill, 2008, p. 155).

Driskill then goes on to state the same thing expressed by co-researcher David Rattray – that we need to deal with our shared pain, our historic trauma, before we can take on the revolutionary act of revitalizing our language. Driskill, however, feels that by reclaiming our languages, we are in fact working towards addressing our historic trauma.

...deeply addressing issues of historic trauma is fundamental to building revolutionary movements, because such an undertaking cannot take place until after historic trauma is addressed.... Reclaiming our languages, practicing our

ceremonies and engaging with our traditions are revolutionary acts against colonial powers (Driskill, 2008, p. 157).

bell hooks (1996), cultural critic, feminist theorist, scholar and writer of African-American descent writes: “None of us create successful revolutionary movements for social change if we begin from the standpoint of woundedness” (p. 145). In McIvor’s (2005) Master’s research, she writes about the healing potential of language learning by describing what a co-researcher told her:

An administrator described how the traditional language can be a healer for the community. She described the language as a gift that was available to help all Aboriginal people feel whole again. She expressed that not allowing the language in (to oneself) was a manifestation of “generational shame” passed down. She hoped that all community members would have the opportunity to feel the joy of speaking the language of their ancestors (p. 82).

In an email conversation, Dr. Lorna Williams, Lil’wat from the St’at’yem’c First Nation, stated, “Language revitalization helps the healing. It is difficult at the beginning. People tend to grieve their sense of loss but their language learning creates their sense of connection” (personal communication, June 19, 2012).

The meaning of healing in an Indigenous context. Co-researchers David Rattray and Curtis Rattray speak about the need for our people to heal, but what does that mean in a Tahltan context? It is important to define terminology that deals with health and healing from an Indigenous perspective before trying to answer that question.

Health. Aboriginal peoples generally see health as being holistic – encompassing physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual factors (Hart, 2002; McIvor and Napoleon,

2009; Mehl-Madrona, 1997; Mussell, Nicholls, & Adler, 1999). Bill Mussell (2005), a member of the Skwah First Nation (Chilliwack, BC), and the chair and president of the Native Mental Health Association of Canada, and chair of the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Advisory Committee to the Mental Health Commission of Canada, has defined health as “a condition of well-being” (p. 11). In regards to health, Mussell (2005) goes on to describe it in regards to family and personal identity. “Members of healthy families possess personal purpose, value family membership, seek information, offer assistance, make choices, experience humility, have a sense of humour, believe in an optimistic future, identify with family heritage and possess a relatively secure personal identity” (p. 11).

Wellness. The Fraser Valley Aboriginal Steering Group (2002) has defined wellness as finding a balance between the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual aspects of life.

Healing. The definition of healing from an Aboriginal perspective is “restoring physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance to the lives of individuals, families, and communities” (Brant Castellano, 2009, p. 204). Bill Mussell (2005) speaks to the importance of healing from our collective past:

Healing from harmful effects of the past begins with the person deciding it is time to find help to heal and to take risks involved in talking openly about what they remember about their past. Within a safe caring relationship, the person acknowledges the real feelings related to the trauma instead of staying stuck with the defensive feelings of rage, blame and helplessness. It is trauma and

attachment difficulties that cause emotional development to regress, slow down or become blocked (p. 27).

From the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996),

When Aboriginal Peoples in Canada talk about traditional healing, they include a wide range of activities, from physical cures using herbal medicines and other remedies, to the promotion of psychological and spiritual well-being using ceremony, counselling and the accumulated wisdom of elders (Vol. 3, p. 325).

After defining the terms health, wellness, and healing from an Indigenous perspective, the common thread that they all share is the importance of balancing the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual realms of life at the individual, family, and community level.

Healing specifically deals with the restoration of that balance to the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Returning to the question that I posed earlier about healing from a Tahltan perspective, I realized that I needed to delve further into what our people need to do in order to heal, which led me to the concept of protective factors involving cultural and language revitalization.

Language and culture as protective factors. About a month after my conversation with David Rattray, I received information about an online presentation given by Cree researcher Onowa McIvor (2010b) entitled, “Language and Culture as Protective Factors, Resilience in Indigenous Communities.” A University of British Columbia doctoral student from the Department of Language and Literacy Education (who has since completed her PhD), McIvor had completed a Master of Arts in the School of Child and Youth Care from the Faculty of Human and Social Development at the University of Victoria. Her Master’s research involved studying language nests –

programming which involves early childhood language immersion. I learned a lot from her presentation and was able to access several sources dealing with the connection between health and culture and language. Onowa McIvor and Art Napoleon (2009) use the term, “protective factors” when referring to language and culture. Factors are considered “protective” if they “increase the likelihood of positive health behaviours or outcomes...or moderate and discourage behaviours that might lead to negative health outcomes” (Blum and Mmari, 2005, pp. 1-2). In their comprehensive literature review and analysis focusing on Aboriginal languages and cultures and their role in maintaining and improving health for Aboriginal peoples, McIvor and Napoleon ask the question, “What role does the use of traditional language and culture play in maintaining health and reducing risk factors in Aboriginal communities?” (2009, p. 6).

When examining research that deals specifically with Aboriginal peoples’ health in Canada, Wilson and Rosenberg (2002) identify two distinct types of literature that are available. The first body of research, which is vast in size, uses quantitative methods to investigate health and illness from an epidemiologic perspective. “While important, it is flawed by the fact that few studies incorporate First Nations peoples’ culture into analyses of health” (Wilson and Rosenberg, 2002, p. 2017). The second body of research uses qualitative methods to link culture and health. Within this second group, there have been studies that have focused on specific aspects of Aboriginal culture, such as land, traditional activities, and language. There are several studies that point to the connection between health and land, such as Adelson (2000a), Wilson (2003), Wolsko et al. (2006), and Warry (1998). As well, there are studies that have made connections between mental health and community (Stewart, 2008), health and traditional activities (Wilson and

Rosenberg, 2002) and health and spirituality (Garrouette et al., 2003). These studies speak to the positive effects of cultural revitalization on health. Co-researcher David Rattray spoke about the positive aspects of cultural activities and how they help to build on

Tahltan identity:

*The other projects we used to do with that \$10,000
was we'd go to Day's ranch and the whole community went there
for blue grouse hunting.
It was fantastic.
And we'd do storytelling
and things like that around there
and drumming and games.
You name it, those types of cultural activities.
I had a dance group in Dease Lake for about four to five years
and we studied some of the Tahltan songs
and we studied some of the histories.
So we used to tour the province
and we talk about who we are as Tahltan people.
And that was extremely positive.
That was one of the, in my personal opinion,
it was probably one of the best things we ever did.
The kids wanted to make drums,
so we had drums.
It was in school.
Then they wanted to sing,
so we learned some songs.
They wanted to perform so we said,
"Well, we got to make regalia."
So we made regalia and it just snowballed from there.
The people are in their 30s or 40s now
and they still point to that as a very critical place in their world.
It was a phenomenal experience
and the kids want to replicate it.
These are the kind of things that I find are really valuable
because we looked at who we were as Tahltan people in that process.
And the community really bought into it,
Iskut, Telegraph, and Dease Lake,
so it became a really binding experience for the most part.
(David Rattray).*

McIvor and Napoleon (2009) outlined six specific themes in which culture is seen to be a protective factor: Connection between land and health, traditional medicine,

spirituality, traditional foods, traditional activities, and language. From these six protective factors, the first five can be considered to be ways to revitalize culture, with language being the sixth protective factor that has not been a major focus of Aboriginal health and healing studies. McIvor and Napoleon (2009) maintain that most literature and studies have focused on the connection between health and culture, but not specifically on the connection between health and language. However, the research of Darcy Hallett, Michael J. Chandler and Christopher E. Lalonde (2007) has been groundbreaking in that it has tied language to health outcomes, specifically, to suicide prevention. Regarding their study, Hallett et al. (2007) state, “as far as we have been able to determine, there are no previous studies that have attempted to demonstrate a specific link between indigenous language loss and community-level measures of health and wellbeing” (p. 394). In the 2007 study, Hallett et al. looked at language separately from the other six factors from Chandler and Lalonde’s 1998 study, which are land claims, self-government, education services, police and fire services, health services, and cultural facilities (Chandler et al., 1998). In the 2007 study, the rates of suicide in Aboriginal communities with a high level of language use (knowledge) dropped to zero in all but one community. The authors state that their results show that Aboriginal language usage is a “strong predictor of health and wellbeing in Canada’s Aboriginal communities” (p. 398). Aboriginal scholars Julian Robbins and Jonathan Dewar (2011) write about the connection between language and healing:

Arguably, since Indigenous languages contain encoded specifics about traditional healing methodologies, knowledge of these language allows one to more effectively access and transmit this healing knowledge to those that need it. Thus,

one could hypothesize that the continuity of Indigenous healing knowledge may be at least one contributing factor to the low rates of Indigenous suicide, where language retention was high. Knowledge of Indigenous languages can contribute greatly to the overall holistic health of individuals and communities (p. 7).

The meaning of healing in a Tahltan context. From the literature that I have read on this topic, specifically Aboriginal Health and the connection to culture and language, there has not been much written on the importance of Indigenous languages to traditional healing (McIvor, 2010). To go one step further, I could not find any research or writings that deal specifically with healing and how it can be an impediment to language revitalization. Most of the research speaks to cultural revitalization and language revitalization as being healing to Aboriginal peoples, but it does not focus on how the pain that Aboriginal people have been going through can be seen to be a barrier to language revitalization. This was brought to my attention by co-researcher David Rattray.

Talking about pain is probably the biggest impediment to revitalization of language.

Nobody wants to acknowledge that.

What I see when we talk about language – that's the kind of thing that's going to impede big time.

That, to me, is a barrier for language revitalization.

Not for cultural revitalization.

Because the people would love to go out and camp out.

I keep going back to Tahltan and to Day's ranch.

The people just come and thoroughly enjoy that time together.

So I can see a differentiation between cultural revitalization and language revitalization.

And the language revitalization is almost a next step after the cultural revitalization.

But can you see what I'm trying to say?

Because it's easier to do the cultural, way, way, way easier to do the cultural

than to do the language.
(David Rattray).

I return to the question I posed earlier – What does it mean to heal from a Tahltan perspective? What I have learned from the voices of the co-researchers is that we need to be proud of who we are as Tahltan people and we need to come together and work together as a community. The revitalization of our culture and language can help with building both self-esteem at an individual level and overall core identity as Tahltan people. In regards to language, we can look at Tahltan language revitalization as a positive incentive to heal our people while also revitalizing our language. David Rattray has stated that we cannot revitalize our language until we have healed our people. At a conference held at the University of Victoria in 1997 to examine the implications of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples report, a similar sentiment to David's was expressed, but in regards to healing and the treaty process.

The process of healing, of building physically, mentally and spiritually healthy individuals and communities, was expressed frequently during the conference as a necessary prerequisite to further action. Individuals and communities, it was suggested, need to heal before they can go forward. This was emphasized by one conference participant who noted that it is difficult to focus on the long term benefits offered through the treaty process when there are immediate and glaring health, social and economic problems facing communities. First Nations can not wait the years it takes to have treaties implemented in order to have healthy communities. At the very least, the issue of renewing and rebuilding communities needs to be dealt with in a parallel process (Duquette, 1997, p. 39).

I propose that Tahltan language revitalization and the healing of our people need to be carried out simultaneously. How we might proceed as a Nation is discussed in the answer to the research question, “In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize the Tahltan language?” and the section entitled, “Sharing of the Learnings.”

In the Past and Present, What Has Been Done to Maintain, Preserve, and Revitalize our Tahltan Language?

For this research question, with the help of linguist Leanne Hinton's (2001b) chapter, "Language Planning" in *The Green Book of Language Revitalization in Practice and First Peoples' Heritage*, Language and Culture Council's (2010) *Report on the Status of BC First Nations Languages 2010*, I came up with a way to organize the learnings based on two categories, Usage and Resources. For Usage, the main category focuses on "Community." For Resources, it has been divided into "Human Resources" and "Documentation Resources." For each of these sub-categories, a table has been included to summarize the learnings. For this question, I began by assessing the status of the Tahltan language by working through the criteria listed under the two categories.

Table 3. Organization of the Learnings for Research Question 2

Research Question 2: In the past and present, what has been done to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language?
<i>Assessing the status of the Tahltan language</i>
USAGE
Community Home On the land Workplace Community events Educational institutes
RESOURCES
Human Resources Speakers Language Teachers Community Members Organizations Consultants Documentation Resources Linguistic materials and publications Dictionaries and grammar guides Classroom materials Recordings Technology

Based on the learnings, I have attempted to answer this research question in order to give a description of past accomplishments and the current situation of Tahltan language revitalization.

Assessing the status of the Tahltan language. In order to assess the status of the Tahltan language, I have used two main categories, Usage and Resources.

Usage. This category is based on the usage of the language from a community perspective. According to the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council's (2010) Framework for Defining and Measuring Language Endangerment, the Tahltan language is considered to be "Nearly Extinct" (p. 13), with the criterion being that it is

rarely used by Elders except for documentation purposes, along with the existence of some language programming.

Table 4. Assessing the status of the Tahltan Language – Usage

USAGE
COMMUNITY
<p>HOME Language rarely spoken</p> <p>ON THE LAND Limited language use in culture camps</p> <p>WORKPLACE Language rarely spoken</p> <p>COMMUNITY EVENTS Leaders beginning to use language in their addresses/speeches</p> <p>EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Pre-school programs Limited language use in all 3 Aboriginal Head Start programs (ages 3-5)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">K-12 school programs Non-accredited language classes in all 3 schools (30 min/day, 3-5 days/week)</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">Post-secondary programs First-year courses developed; not implemented</p>

Community. It is important to organize the usage of the language starting from a community perspective, with “home,” “workplace,” “community events,” and “educational institutes” all being considered crucial elements of community.

Home. The Tahltan language is rarely, if ever, being used in the home. An example of this is the home of Tahltan Elders Henry and Edna Quock, both fluent speakers of the Tahltan language. They mainly communicate in English with each other, their family and friends, and even with other fluent Tahltan speakers (personal communication, September 19, 2008).

On the land. The two Tahltan health authorities have taken on a key role in preserving and revitalizing Tahltan language and culture by organizing culture camps that have provided language speaking and education opportunities for Tahltan community

members. Such camps provide communities with a way in which to carry out traditional cultural activities in the language across generations of community members at the same time. (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). The role of the two Tahltan health authorities in language revitalization will be explained in more detail under "Human Resources," – Organizations.

Workplace. According to Christine Ball, Director of Health Programs, there have been efforts by the Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority in Telegraph Creek to have language lessons at the beginning of each workday for 15 minutes at both the health centre and the band office (personal communication, October 20, 2010). Besides this, the Tahltan language is not being used in the workplace. When I was in Chief Rick McLean's office in October 2010, I saw a list of Tahltan phrases posted above his desk. It was originally to be posted in classrooms in the Tahltan School for the entire school body to learn and use, but it has made its way into workplaces in Telegraph Creek.

Community events. In the recent past, only on rare occasions would the language have been used at community events. This consisted of people stating their Tahltan name and saying a Tahltan greeting, and then continuing on in English for the rest of their speech. This is starting to change, as witnessed at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Tahltan Declaration. From October 16-18, 2010, all of the Tahltan leaders attempted to speak in Tahltan in their speeches. Chief Marie Quock of the Iskut Nation is a semi-fluent speaker and she gave her welcoming speech, "Honouring Our Ancestors" in the Tahltan language.

Dūgi dzenēs hoti'e.

Nadabēts ūshyeh. Tsesk'iye ekuhn tsi'h ja' ast'ē.

Welcome, dah keyeh hots 'i' didene ekuhn, dahchiki'e, dasjān ekuhn, edōne k'aji.

Ēy dene ekuhn nitsādzi hots 'ih tlādeli, kaji, welcome.

*Dah keyeh hots'i' k'aji tlandunja'i.
 Meduh dah datsehi ekuhn, dik'ūk dahnene k'ide hede zi' kehidiān, lān hudōnidihi ja'
 adahiht'ē.
 Ła ja' ahedī, dah datsehi ekuhn dah keyeh dahdayūs el
 hot'ānesit'anh. Nihutsedi hots'ih didah keyeh k'eh dadahedijih dah datsehi ekuhn,
 dinenh soga hinīhīn', hok'ide tledahiganh. Meduh dah datsehi.
 Dūgi dzenēs jāni tlichesidēdli lān dah datsehi ekuhn ghāsadesidih. Dah datsehi ekuhn
 soga k'inhedidīch.
 dah dātseh hūnehinh dūda odadīl.
 Hūēni sā edū dahnene hoti'e hole'i. Yēda dah keyeh k'eh at'ē dasjān ekun el k'a'a dah
 dzēge nahodi' hodalēl dah keyeh k'ide dukuh ja' dah ghahūniān. Ka'a huk'eh
 k'indesidih.
 Ka'a' dah ye' edōne dukuh kohedeī.
 Meduh, Dahdatsehi ekuhn.¹*

Although not fluent speakers, Rick McLean, Chief Councillor of the Tahltan Nation, and Annita McPhee, President of the Tahltan Central Council, both made efforts to use the Tahltan language in their speeches during the celebration. McPhee introduced herself in Tahltan and used Tahltan greetings and phrases in her speeches. Janet Vance spoke about how she helped McLean with the language for his speeches:

*Like that Rick McLean came down to me
 a couple of hours before the opening [100th anniversary of the signing of the Tahltan
 Declaration]
 and he wanted me to teach him how to say
 certain things in Tahltan language.
 So I have it written down for him
 and he did pretty good job.
 (Janet Vance).*

In this particular instance, Chief McLean contacted Janet Vance informally to help him with his speech.

Educational institutes.

Pre-school programs. In the three Tahltan communities, educational programming for children ages 3-5 is administered by the Aboriginal Head Start

¹ This speech was written by Marie Quock's sister, Angela Dennis, fluent speaker and language teacher at the Klappan School in Iskut, BC. The speech was provided to me by Angela Dennis.

programs under the two health authorities. Aboriginal Head Start programs are preschool programs designed for Aboriginal children, both urban and off-reserve. Their primary goals are to:

...support the early childhood development of Aboriginal children and to instill pride in their Aboriginal heritage before they enter the mainstream school system. It focuses on 3 – 5 year olds with the intent of bringing them to the school readiness stage in order to help ensure an easy transition into kindergarten (Aboriginal Head Start Association of British Columbia, 2012).

The programming focuses on six interrelated components: education, health promotion, culture and language, nutrition, social support, and parental/family involvement (Health Canada, 2010). In all three programs, there is limited Tahltan language instruction. In Iskut and Dease Lake, there is no Tahltan language instruction by fluent speakers at this point in time but the Tahltan language is used in songs and other cultural activities.

Besides teaching the Tahltan language at the Dease Lake School, Loretta Quock-Sort also taught in the Head Start Program. Jenny Quock, a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language, worked in the Iskut Head Start Program from 1997 to 2003. She talked about the language and cultural activities that she was part of during her time at the Iskut Head Start Program, including designing a book in the Tahltan language based on a popular children's book and teaching them about preparing moose hide.

*I teach my children, the little ones,
to talk the Tahltan language
and I even made a book up,
"Brown Bear, Brown Bear [What Do You See],"
and I put it into the Tahltan language.
And I got a moose skin on a little frame
and a scraper*

*and tagōdi², that bone,
I got it all there.
and I think Carol [Quock, Head Start coordinator] still has it yet.
And little girls and boys,
they come and try to pretend they are working on moose hide,
but a small little frame, eh?
And my husband [the late Robert Quock] even made a turkey bone tagōdi [laughter]
out of sheep bone and goat, I think.
He made that tagōdi and little scraper.
(Jenny Quock).*

In honour of the 100th Anniversary Celebration of the signing of the Declaration of the Tahltan Tribe, the Iskut Head Start Program produced a children's t-shirt, which was very well received, with the following logo on the front and back:

(front) Helping Me Grow...
Sing with Me
Drum with Me
Dance with Me
Tell me Stories
Play with Me
(back) Helping me Grow...
My Culture
My Tahltan Language
My Family
My Elders
My Community

In September 2010, Tahltan language instruction began at the Head Start Program in Telegraph Creek with Janet Vance, a retired language teacher, teaching the language twice a week for 15 minutes each session on Mondays and Wednesdays. While Janet is happy to be teaching Tahltan to the young children in the Head Start Program, she feels the language should be more often.

*We should have it at least three days a week.
Too bad they never had school on Fridays.
Could have been Monday, Wednesday, and Friday.
(Janet Vance).*

²tool for fleshing hides (Iskut First Nation, 2003).

K-12 school programs. The Tahltan language is taught in all three schools in the Tahltan communities of Iskut, Telegraph Creek, and Dease Lake. The Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek and the Dease Lake School in Dease Lake are both School District 87 (Stikine) public schools. The Klappan Independent Day School is a private school operated by the Iskut Nation. At all three schools, students get a maximum of 30 minutes of Tahltan language instruction per day. The Tahltan language is taught like any other subject, but the BC Ministry of Education does not recognize it as a program with approved curriculum compared to the other subjects that students are taking. The language teachers feel that the language needs to be an accredited subject like the other subjects taught in their schools.

*What needs to be done
is that the Tahltan Language
needs to be a recognized language.
(Loretta Quock-Sort).*

Post-secondary programs. University credit courses for the Tahltan language have been developed as a result of an Aboriginal Language Conversation Program at Northwest Community College. This program was part of Northwest Community College's Aboriginal Service Plan that ran over three years, from 2008 to 2011. Northwest Community College had received funds from the provincial government through the Ministry of Advanced Education to support the development and implementation of its Aboriginal Service Plan Goals and Objectives. An Aboriginal Service Plan is:

...a three-year strategic and operational plan developed by a post-secondary institution and its Aboriginal communities that outlines goals for Aboriginal learners in terms of access, participation, and success and identifies specific

actions to be implemented to meet these goals. Actions may include the development or enhancement of programs, student support services, outreach activities, partnership/affiliation agreements, alternative program delivery models, etc. (Ministry of Regional Economic and Skills Development, 2007).

In my first conversation with Angela Dennis, she spoke about the need for adult language courses. She felt it was imperative for the parents of her students to also be learning the language.

*I had a child in here who was in kindergarten/grade one
and she was doing really well.
Really, really well.
And one day she came back to class
and she kept fooling around, fooling around, fooling around.
And I said, "What's going on with you today?"
And she said, "I don't want to speak our language anymore."
And I said, "Why?"
She said, "Because when I went home and I talked it to my mom and dad
they said, 'I don't know what you're saying.'"
And so she said, "I don't want to talk it anymore."
(Angela Dennis).*

Tahltan Educator Carolyn Doody also felt that it was important for parents to be learning the language:

*Parents need to learn it to teach it to their children.
It cannot be all up to one or two people to keep our language alive.
(Carolyn Doody).*

Fluent speaker and retired language teacher Janet Vance added,

*What I was thinking too
that I always stressed it out to this school.
That they should have an evening class for the young parents.
Let them learn what you teaching their little ones
so that way they can use that everyday and not let it go.
Because they learn it here and then they go home
and do that language.
Here those little ones,
they confused, see?*

*Because they can't understand.
 Their parents don't know Tahltan.
 Just think of what it does to them
 because they're so proud of their self here doing it.
 That's why it's important,
 they should have evening class.
 (Janet Vance).*

One solution Angela Dennis had is to run evening classes for the parents and other adults. She has noticed that the children will go home and try to speak to their parents in Tahltan, using the language that they have learned in school. The majority of parents cannot speak their language and so cannot interact with their children.

*There's a gap there.
 It takes a community to make a language thrive again.
 If they really want to resurrect it out of the ashes so to speak –
 we only have a handful of Elders left today who are fluent speakers
 and if they throw together a language class
 three times a week, if not five times a week, even three times a week,
 I think it will be good.
 And use it at home.
 Even just labelling things and using it at home is a start.
 And from there, they can build it up until they're,
 even if they're semi-fluent, it helps.
 Some of the parents who are non-speakers mentioned,
 "You know, I'd be really interested in a language class if they'd start one."
 I don't know who "they" is and I hope "they" isn't just only me
 because I can't take on everything.
 I can't work so many hours in the day and decide,
 "Oh well, I think I'm going to give an adult language class."
 It's not up to me.
 I really wouldn't mind participating and helping Elders do that,
 putting it together.
 I'd love to do that, I can help them,
 work with them if they'd want me to.
 But it's not entirely up to me do it.
 I can do the part that I'm doing right now.
 I'm okay with –
 but it takes a community.
 It goes back to the community to make a language come alive again,
 to even retain it.
 (Angela Dennis).*

After talking about how she could not take on the task of starting an adult night class on her own, Angela said, referring to me,

*You teach adults,
you would be a great person to help start an adult language class.*
(Angela Dennis).

Northwest Community College (2007) had asked me to coordinate the delivery of five accredited Aboriginal language conversation courses. Keeping in mind what Angela Dennis had said about me being someone who could assist in starting a Tahltan evening language course, I agreed to take on the position of coordinator as long as the Tahltan language could be one of the first five languages to be developed, and the college agreed.

The development of university-credit Tahltan language courses was supported by the Tahltan Nation, the Iskut Nation, and the Tahltan Central Council. Both the campus administrator for Northern Lights College's Dease Lake campus and the president of Northern Lights College were in support of a partnership with Northwest Community College to offer university accredited first year Tahltan conversation courses on Tahltan territory. After getting the go ahead from these different organizations, I started to develop Tahltan conversation courses. After creating course outlines (Appendix G) that included the objectives, the learning outcomes, schedule, reading lists, amongst other things, I brought the course outlines to several college committees and councils where it was vetted. I also sent the course outlines to the Tahltan language teachers to get their feedback. I will also bring the course outlines to the Tahltan Language Authority when it is formed.

Resources.

Human resources.

Speakers. As of 2010, there were 50 fluent speakers of the Tahltan language, out of a reported population of 1,377 (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). Based on that population, there were 4% fluent speakers, 19% semi-speakers, and 18% learners of the Tahltan language (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). This is based on numbers supplied to First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council by the two Tahltan health authorities: Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority, whose mandate is to serve the two communities of Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake; and Iskut Valley Health Services, who is responsible for the community of Iskut. As per First Peoples' Council's Framework for Defining and Measuring Language Endangerment, our language falls into the "Critically Endangered – Nearly Extinct" (p. 23) Level of Endangerment since it is no longer being learned as a first language by children, is only spoken by the grandparent generation and up, and it is not normally spoken by adults and children except for some individuals who are learning the language.

Language teachers. Presently, there are three individuals teaching the Tahltan language, one in each of the three schools. While I have called them "language teachers," only Angela Dennis has been given that designation. The other two individuals, Pauline Hawkins and Sonia Dennis, have been given the title of "Aboriginal Language and Cultural Assistants" by School District No. 87.

Individuals who have previously taught the Tahltan language in the schools include Loretta Quock-Sort, who taught the language in Dease Lake from 2001 to 2010, as well as retired language teachers Patrick Carlick (Telegraph Creek), Janet Vance

(Telegraph Creek), and Regina Louie (Iskut). Jenny Quock (Iskut) also taught the Tahltan language in the Iskut Head Start program.

Community members. There are many Tahltan individuals who are either trying to learn the language, have developed language materials, or who have specific training in language learning/revitalization, as well as individuals who have been contributing to the revitalization of our language. Once the Tahltan Language Authority is formed and carries out a community language survey, we will become aware of Tahltan individuals who are carrying out important language revitalization activities. To go forward in the planning stage, we will need teachers, artists, grant writers, curriculum developers, computer experts, and many other skilled individuals to assist in revitalizing our language.

Organizations. There are several community organizations, such as political, educational, social, governmental, and health, that have been involved at some level to promote the Tahltan language.

Tahltan Central Council. The Tahltan Central Council (2010b) is the central administrative governing body for the Tahltan Nation and Iskut Nation. This organization has directly or indirectly been involved in the promotion and documentation of Tahltan language and culture. Their mandate includes:

- 1) Self-determination for the Tahltan people;
- 2) Environmental stewardship which includes protecting the land and Tahltan culture;
- 3) Ensuring the people benefit from the land and resources; and
- 4) Development of healthy communities.

In 2006, Curtis Rattray, Chair of the Tahltan Central Council at the time, drafted society act forms for *Dahdzege* Language and Cultural Society, which consisted of several Tahltan Elders and other “language champions,” (personal communication, September 28, 2010), namely individuals “working to develop teaching resources, archives, documentation, and to teach the language to others” and “advocating for the future of their languages” (First Peoples’ Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010, p. 24). The *Dahdzege* Language and Cultural Society also created a draft strategic plan entitled, *Dahdzege: “Our Voice”* Tahltan Language and Culture Strategic Plan, which outlined “the Tahltan Nation’s vision, goals, and priorities for the revitalization and preservation of the Tahltan language and culture” (Tahltan Central Council, 2006, p. 1). The *Dahdzege* Language and Cultural Society listed areas of concern that they had regarding Tahltan language and culture:

The number of fluent speakers is decreasing. The youth attending school are not able to practice Tahltan language at home or in the community. The number of hours per week Tahltan students is [*sic*] being taught Tahltan language in the schools and community is very limited. There are no organized attempts to preserve the loss of Tahltan language. Our culture is not dying but there are some pieces missing, we just need to revive the missing pieces. We are not speaking our language in the community and at community events (Tahltan Central Council, 2006, p. 1-2).

On July 3rd 2010 at the Tahltan Central Council’s Annual General Meeting, Curtis Rattray brought forward a resolution to create a Tahltan Language Authority, which passed unanimously:

Be it resolved that the Tahltan Central Council AGM authorizes the creation of a Tahltan Language Authority to organize the Tahltan Nation's efforts to revitalize the Tahltan language by registering as a society, documenting the Tahltan language, developing a language revitalization strategic plan, seeking funding and coordinating the Tahltan communities' language revitalization efforts.

Later that summer, on behalf of the Tahltan Central Council, Curtis submitted a proposal to the First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council for the development of a Tahltan Language Authority. He outlined the goals for the Tahltan Language Authority over three years:

Year One:

1. To develop a Tahltan language authority by conducting community sessions to determine the structure of the board, role and responsibilities of the authority and to seek input into a Tahltan language revitalization plan.
2. To register the Tahltan language authority as a society under the BC Society Act.
3. To develop a Tahltan language revitalization plan and present to the first language authority annual general meeting.
4. Recruit Tahltan language fluent speakers to participate in the revitalization of the Tahltan language.

Year Two:

1. To seek funding for the implementation of the Tahltan language revitalization plan.

2. To create a list of the existing Tahltan language resource materials and develop a Tahltan language documentation plan to create the most vital and useful language resource materials.
3. Develop a language resource materials sharing system among the Tahltan Nation.
4. Hold an annual general meeting to provide strategic direction to Tahltan language revitalization.
5. To research and document the Tahltan language and culture.
6. To provide training for researchers and capacity building of the Dahdzege by expanding the resources in our communities.

Year Three:

1. To evaluate the first year's performance of the implementation of the Tahltan language revitalization plan.
2. To increase the number of fluent Tahltan speakers by providing language classes and focusing on the partial speakers.
3. To expose youth to the Tahltan language and culture (TTC, 2010a).

In November 2010, Curtis completed year one's goal #2 by registering the Tahltan Language Society under the BC Society Act.

In 2012, the Iskut Nation successfully applied for funding through First Peoples' Heritage, Language, and Culture Council to develop a Tahltan Language Authority.

School District 87 (Stikine). On November 9, 2010, the British Columbia Ministry of Education, First Nations of the Stikine (Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, Taku River Tlingit First Nation), and School District 87 (Stikine) signed the Aboriginal Education Enhancement Agreement (AEEA).

The purpose of this agreement is to “ensure high levels of emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual success for Aboriginal learners” (School District 87, 2010, p. 3). One goal, specific to language, which this agreement hopes to accomplish is “honouring and supporting the revitalization of the languages, cultures, histories and traditions of the Aboriginal people whose traditional territories are served by School District 87” (School District 87, 2010, p. 3).

Tahltan health authorities. As was mentioned under “Usage” – On the Land, the two Tahltan health authorities have taken on a key role in preserving and revitalizing Tahltan language and culture. Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority serves the two communities of Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake and Iskut Valley Health Services serves Iskut. Some examples of language and culture activities that have been organized by the two health Authorities are culture camps at Muddy Lake (located between Telegraph Creek and Dease Lake) and at Kawdichō (located on the Klappan road just outside of Iskut) that have provided language speaking and education opportunities for Tahltan community members (C. Rattray, personal communication, September 28, 2010; D. Rattray, personal communication, 1 October 13, 2010; C. Ball, personal communication, October 20, 2010). “They [Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority and Iskut Valley Health Services] provide culture camps with language speaking and education opportunities, language mentorship program, documentation of traditional medicines, social development of the communities, promotion of Tahltan language use” (Tahltan Central Council, 2010a).

Stikine Wholistic Working Group. The Stikine Wholistic Working Group was formed by members of the Iskut Nation (Iskut), the Tahltan Nation (Telegraph Creek and

Dease Lake), Taku River Tlingit First Nation (Atlin), Daylu Dena Council (Lower Post) and Dease River First Nation (Good Hope Lake) to work on a large project entitled, “Initiating Change.”

Just recently there was a tripartite agreement between the Kaska, the Taku River Tlingit and the Tahltan through the Ministry of Children and Families. And they want to explore better ways of dealing with the social issues in these three nations. And out of that came a paper or a booklet with all kinds of cultural reconnections and language revitalization ideas. It focused pretty heavily on land and use. So the Ministry of Children and Families funded that particular project. And now they’re looking at how to implement the components of it. And in there is language.
(David Rattray).

Since February 2009, the Stikine Wholistic Working Group has worked to “develop a system created by our communities to support our families in their homes and improve our children’s success in school, community and life” (aátleinx’ communicator, 2009, p. 4). In June 2010, the Stikine Wholistic Working Group signed a Protocol and Partnership Memorandum with the BC Ministry of Children and Families (Tahltan Central Council, 2010c). Curtis Rattray was involved with the Stikine Wholistic Working Group and their visits to some of the communities:

We went into the communities and we asked them what they wanted to see in regards to children and families services. And they felt that language and culture were a big component of that. And so what they were describing in the session in Telegraph Creek out at the culture camp was that they wanted to see more language programming and cultural programming, like formalized, scheduled activities. And with organized instructors and facilities and resources all there so all you need to do is – the people show up and the instructor does their thing. If it’s tanning moose hide, the language should be part of that. And also you have just language tents

*or parts of the camp or the whole camp
where it's nothing but language.*
(Curtis Rattray).

Consultants. For over a century, academics from outside our territory have worked with our communities on language learning materials and language development and documentation. The work of these individuals can be found in the next category, Documentation resources, with a summary provided in Table 5.

Documentation resources. This next section is divided into five overall subsections – Linguistic materials and publications, dictionaries and grammar guides, classroom materials, recordings, and technology – with each section being further subdivided. This list of language resources comes from Alderete and McIlwraith's (2008) "An annotated bibliography of Tahltan language materials," as well as conversations with the co-researchers, and from my own personal knowledge.

Table 5. Assessing the Status of the Tahltan Language – Documentation Resources

DOCUMENTATION RESOURCES
Linguistic Materials and Publications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Stress and Related Rules in Tahltan</i> (Cook, 1972) -<i>Tahltan Consonant Harmony</i> (Hardwick, 1984a) -<i>Tahltan Morphology and Phonology</i> (Hardwick, 1984b) -<i>Some Comments on the Phonology of Tahltan</i> (Nater, 1989) -<i>Consonant Harmony Systems: The Special Status of Coronal Harmony</i> (Shaw, 1991) -<i>Laryngeal Phenomena in Tahltan</i> (Bob, 1999) -<i>On Tone and Length in Tahltan</i> (Alderete, 2005) -<i>A Corpus-based Approach to Tahltan Stress</i> (Alderete & Bob, 2005) -Tahltan Plant List (Turner, 1997) -Tahltan Word List (Saxon, 1997)
Dictionaries and Grammar Guides
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Notes on the Indian Tribes of the Yukon District and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia</i> (Dawson, 1887) -Dictionary/grammar descriptions/two Tahltan stories [Palgrave, circa 1902] -<i>An Outline of the Language Spoken by the Tahltan Indians</i> [Thorman, n.d.] -<i>Tahltan Words Copied from Mr. Matheson's Notebook</i> [Thorman, circa 1900] -<i>The Structural Basis of Tahltan Indian Society</i> (Adlam, 1985) – short glossary -<i>Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary</i> (Carter & Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994)
Classroom Materials
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons</i> (Carter, 1991) -<i>Dene Tsedle Kedā Kah Ejidedāl: The Moose Hunt</i> (2000) (booklet & audiorecording) -<i>Luwe Ek'ānh Khidi: Tahltan Fish Camp</i> (2000) (booklet & audiorecording) -“<i>Kuji K'at Dahdahweshdetch</i>” <i>Now I Told All of You': Tahltan Language Stories Told by Iskut Elders at Iskut, British Columbia</i> (2003) (booklet http://dl.dropbox.com/u/1986129/ELF%20Booklet.pdf, and CD) -<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What do you see?</i> (book adaptation by Jenny Quock)
Recordings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Land Claims recordings from the 1980s, 415 digital files (Tahltan Tribal Council) -<i>Tahltan Language and Culture CD Series</i> (Alderete, 2007)
Technology
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -<i>Tahltan Language Lessons</i> (http://didenekeh.com) (Dennis, n.d.) -<i>Tahltan Language youtube videos</i> (http://www.youtube.com/user/TahltanChad/videos) (Day, n.d.)

Linguistic materials and publications. Table 5 provides a list of all linguistic publications based on the Tahltan language.

Dictionaries and grammar guides. After the *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons* (1991) was developed, the *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (Carter & Tahltan

Tribal Council, 1994) was created. This dictionary, with approximately 975 entries in the Tahltan to English section and 1675 entries in the English to Tahltan section (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008), is meant to be used in conjunction with the *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons* (Carter, 1991) for Tahltan language teaching.

Work recorded over a century ago by Dawson, Palgrave, Thorman, and Newcombe could be used to supplement future grammar and dictionary work. George Dawson (1887) recorded 170 Tahltan words in his *Notes on the Indian Tribes of the Yukon District and Adjacent Northern Portion of British Columbia* (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Palgrave [circa 1902] attempted to describe Tahltan grammar, while also presenting an extensive dictionary with both Tahltan-English and English-Tahltan sections and two stories in Tahltan (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Thorman's *An Outline of the Language Spoken by the Tahltan Indians* [n.d.] is based on Palgrave's work (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Thorman's *Tahltan Words Copied from Mr. Matheson's Notebook*, recorded in approximately 1900, contains 465 Tahltan words, which mostly reappear in the *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (Carter and Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994). In Newcombe's notes from the turn of the twentieth century, a list of eight Tahltan words is documented, as well as notes to do with the pronunciation of 'a' in Tahltan words (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). In Robert Adlam's doctoral dissertation, *The Structural Basis of Tahltan Indian Society* (1985), he provides a short glossary of Tahltan words specific to Tahltan kinship terms (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008).

Classroom materials. Under this category, I am focusing on both curriculum and curriculum support materials. Curriculum typically includes a list of things that students are expected to learn while giving teachers ideas and recommendations on how to

transmit that knowledge (Hébert, 2000). Curriculum materials usually have the following: concepts, learning outcomes, procedures, teacher information, activities, and a way to evaluate the students' learning. "More specifically, a language or literacy curriculum makes general statements about content, language learning, learning purpose, experience, evaluation, and the roles and interactions of teachers and learners" (Hébert, 2000, p. 59).

Tahltan curriculum materials have not been developed based on the education standards set by British Columbia's Ministry of Education [n.d.], which are called "Prescribed Learning Outcomes" (PLOs) (para. 1) or provincially prescribed (required) curriculum. The PLOs are statements of "what students are expected to know and be able to do at each grade in each subject" (p. 1). Because of this, language teachers have had to develop materials on their own for their classes. For example, Loretta Quock-Sort spoke about activities that she prepared for students from headstart to grade 8:

*I teach from headstart to grade 8;
the students are learning to read and write our language,
they do work sheets on the Tahltan alphabet,
months, days, seasons,
large & small animals,
birds, plants, fishing, hunting, food,
family members, clans, camping, etc.
I have also taught the Tahltan Family Tree/Clan systems.
It takes a long time to create the worksheets for the Tahltan Language lessons.
My husband, who is a certified teacher,
has been my support for going on 8 1/2 years.
For the cultural aspect
I have taught the students about Medicine bags,
Button Blankets,
the rules for Hand Games,
they have made Mini Button Blanket wall hangings
as well as Hand Game group blankets.
I have read our Tahltan Traditional Legends to them,
then got them to talk to their parents & grandparents
about the topics we have covered in Tahltan Language & Culture classes.*

*On Aboriginal Day we celebrate our culture within the school,
we have taken one of our Traditional Legends (Sunlight, Moonlight & Daylight)
and turned it into a play.*

*We also play our Traditional Hand Games (know as Stick Gambling),
I have taught our Traditional Tahltan dancing from heardstart to grade 3.
We also play Indian Bingo.*

*On Aboriginal Day we get parents, grandparents, Elders, aunties & uncles
who attend the event.*

*One year we got one Elder to do the family with the students,
we also got a Tahltan Carver to come in and carve and talk to the students about art.*

*On this day we Tahltan staff along with the parents/grandparents bring in our
Traditional Foods to share with the students.*

(Loretta Quock-Sort).

In his role as principal at the Dease Lake School, David Rattray often had the opportunity to be in the classroom. When I asked him about his involvement with culture and language in the classroom, he replied:

*Oh, in Dease Lake, I had a lot, it got to the point where,
when the Tahltan language teacher was sick, I'd just take over her job.
That's kind of neat.*

And we had a committee that sort of ran the school.

And we acquired a \$10,000/year budget for cultural activities.

*And so our language program, for example,
we'd spend maybe a week or two weeks
learning the language around an activity.*

*Then on the Friday
we'd do the activity.*

*And some of the activities we did were things like bannock making,
and all the Tahltan around that,
and another was making dry meat.*

And we'd use all the Tahltan around that.

And then the kids would make it on the Friday.

*And a larger project we did would be
where the kids would learn the language about a winter camp
and then we'd go out and hunt rabbits.*

And Uncle Pat (Carlick) and Henry Vance would give instructions in Tahltan.

*They would know what it is,
like get wood or get water or whatever it is.*

*And Uncle Pat and Henry were talking strictly in Tahltan
and the kids could understand the gist of what they were saying.*

And then they would always answer in English.

Not one student would answer in Tahltan.

So it's sort of the growth that the kids go through in learning the language.
(David Rattray).

Pauline Hawkins spoke about an activity in which she had her students sharing their favourite Tahltan phrase:

*One of the things I did with the students
is I taught them all these different phrases
and I said to them,
"Okay, we're going to make placemats now."
So I had them all make a placemat
and it had these Native designs around it.
And I said,
"I want you to put your name,
what clan you're from,
and I want you to write down your favourite phrase."
So they all had to write down their favourite phrases then.
Some of them,
they wrote down "See you tomorrow."
And I wrote down my favourite phrase,
"Don't ask me!" (laughter)*
(Pauline Hawkins).

Janet Vance felt that learning about household items was a good way to start learning the language:

*Yeah, like household stuff,
Like utensils, clothing, bedding,
I think that's the best way to start the language.*
(Janet Vance).

Curriculum support materials. While there is not much in the way of accredited Tahltan language curriculum, there are materials available that would support the development of such curriculum. David Rattray was part of a team that was able to secure funding to have a local practical orthography designed, along with the creation of *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons* (1991) with accompanying cassette tapes. In David's words,

Back in 1980 when I was in Telegraph,

*a group of us spearheaded an initiative,
and we got about a quarter of a million dollars
to get the Tahltan language a formal alphabet designed.
And out of that came a tape on conversation for the year
and stuff like that that the teacher used.*
(David Rattray).

In 2000, the late Tahltan Elder Robert Quock recorded *Dene Tsedle Kedā Kah Ejidedāl: The Moose Hunt* and *Luwe Ek'ānh Khidi: Tahltan Fish Camp* at the Yukon Native Language Centre in Whitehorse, Yukon. These were made into booklets (in Tahltan, with an English translation below each line) with accompanying audio-recordings in the Tahltan language. These booklets are part of a “Talking Book” series. The Yukon Native Language Centre plans on making the Tahltan audio materials available online in the near future (Yukon Native Language Centre, 2011).

In 2003, *'Kuji K'at Dahdahwhesdetch, Now I Told All of You': Tahltan Language Stories Told by Iskut Elders at Iskut, British Columbia* (Iskut First Nation, 2003) was edited and compiled by anthropologist Dr. Thomas McIlwraith, a PhD student from the University of New Mexico at the time, who was focusing on hunting as a cultural system in Iskut, BC for his doctoral research (McIlwraith, 2007; Alderete and McIlwraith, 2008). Thirteen Tahltan language stories were recorded on CD and written in both Tahltan and English and were designed to be used in both the classroom and the home.

Linguist John Alderete (2007) produced a *Tahltan Language and Culture CD Series*, which features fluent speakers from Iskut and is made up of sound recordings and related transcriptions, questionnaires, and catalogues. Of use to Tahltan language educators would be the recordings, in both Tahltan and English, of “Tahltan traditional ‘myth-time’ stories, stories from the recent past, ethnographic accounts of Tahltan

traditional life, music, and dialogues designed for teaching purposes” (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008, p. 4).

Recordings. The Tahltan Central Council is the central administrative governing body for the Tahltan Nation and Iskut Nation. At its Dease Lake office, the Tahltan Central Council has a heritage department where recordings from a 1980s study dealing with governance and sovereignty are housed. There are a total of 415 digital files, with each file being the equivalent of a 45-minute tape (Asp & Banci, 2012). A research team made up of six Tahltan researchers (George Asp, Willie Bob, Ed Asp, James Dennis, the late Fletcher Day, the late Jackie Williams) and one non-Tahltan researcher (Hugh Taylor) interviewed Tahltan people born between 1880 and 1930 (Asp & Banci, 2012).

Vera Asp is leading the Tahltan Ancestral Study, which is under the Tahltan Central Council’s Tahltan Heritage Resources Environmental Assessment Team (THREAT) (Asp & Banci, 2012). One of the objectives of a proposal submitted to the Stikine Wholistic Working Group is to transcribe and translate the Tahltan language contained in those 415 digital files (Asp & Banci, 2012). In a presentation given at the Tahltan Central Council’s annual general meeting in 2012, Vera Asp stated:

Tahltan oral data, collected by the 1980’s study, offers us voices of our Ancestors and provides the Tahltans of today, evidence and example of Tahltan sovereignty, past and present. The interviews, the questions asked and answered, our language, the context, the knowledge and ultimately data of our past is beyond imagination. The knowledge provided information on all systems of sovereignty of the Tahltan Nation (Asp, 2012).

Curtis Rattray spoke about these recordings:

*There's our land claims research.
 I think it did a pretty good job in regards to identifying place names and stuff.
 So that whole research was done around use and occupancy.
 I suspect that some Elders –
 I know that they've used the Tahltan names for these places
 and they may have told stories around some of those places.
 There's these place names
 and their locations
 and the kind of things that went on around there.
 (Curtis Rattray).*

There are also recordings of Tahltan songs, sung by Tahltan community members, recorded by James Teit in 1912 and 1915 on wax cylinders (D. Rattray, personal communication, October 13, 2010; Alderete and McIlwraith, 2008), which are housed at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Hull, Quebec. A transcription of Teit's list of songs can be found in Appendice 2 and 4 of Judy Thompson's (2007) *Recording Their Story: James Teit and the Tahltan*. (Thompson is the curator of Western Subarctic Ethnology at the Canadian Museum of Civilization.)

In 1965, linguists Kenneth Hale and Geoff O'Grady worked with Tahltan Elder Pete Henry to document three Tahltan stories with transcriptions in Tahltan. The set of tapes and field notes documents the structure of the Tahltan language, with specifics about sentence structure, as well as word lists of many nouns. Vowel length and tonal categories, such as high, low, and falling, are also found in the notes (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Gillian Story (1975) interpreted the tapes and field notes of Hale and O'Grady, providing linguistic observations regarding the speech of Pete Henry. In her manuscript, she focuses on Athapaskan phonology and morphology, making her work most valuable to linguists: "the documentation of the verb morphology, especially the conjugation classes, is one of the most extensive to date, which means that they will be of

interest to future grammar writers and grammar users” (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008, p. 21).

Linguist Patricia Shaw’s research in Tahltan territory, from 1980 to 1983, includes field notes and a set of tapes, with copies retained by both Shaw and the Tahltan Nation. Shaw’s work with Tahltan Elders in Telegraph Creek produced over 3500 entries of “paradigmatically related nouns and verbs, as well as some postpositional phrases and place names” (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008, p. 18). Her noun and verb lists could be useful in the development of a more extensive dictionary and grammar texts. At this point, I don’t believe that Shaw’s work has been used to-date.

Technology. Oscar Dennis (n.d.) has developed an online course entitled, “Tahltan Language Lessons,” which is part of the Tahltan Language Revitalization Program that he is coordinating for Iskut Valley Health Services. As well, Chad Day (n.d.), a Tahltan student at the University of Victoria, has developed youtube videos that connect images with Tahltan words, for topics such as insects, body parts, wild mammals, domestic animals, birds, water, and colours.

Now that I have assessed the status of the Tahltan language, I will move on to answering the final research question, “In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize the Tahltan language?” In this upcoming section, I will base my answer on suggestions that I would make to a newly formed Tahltan Language Authority.

In the Future, What Do My People need to do to Continue to Maintain, Preserve, and Revitalize the Tahltan Language?

Based on *Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi*, a Tahltan worldview that I have articulated, I wanted to ensure that this research would be relevant and useful to my people. At this point in time, my people are working on getting a Tahltan language authority started. I would like to base the answers to this research question on suggestions that I would make to this newly formed language authority. I find it difficult to make recommendations about what we need to do in order to revitalize our language – I do not feel like it is my place. However, I need to remind myself that I am giving voice to the co-researchers in my study, scholars who have worked with our Tahltan communities, other Indigenous community language revitalization experts, and international language revitalization scholars. I am also reminded of a conversation that I had with Rick McLean, Chief Councillor of the Tahltan Nation, at the 100th anniversary celebration of the signing of the Tahltan Declaration in October 2010. I had asked him if I could interview him to find out what he thought we needed to do in order to revitalize our language. He just looked at me, smiled, and said, “That’s why you’re going to school, so you can tell us!” (personal communication, October 18, 2010).

Formation of a Tahltan Language Authority. Our people have been attempting to get a Tahltan Language Authority started for several years, from the work that Curtis Rattray did while he was chair of the Tahltan Central Council, to the resolution that was passed at the Tahltan Central Council’s annual general meeting on July 3, 2010 that unanimously supported the creation of a Tahltan Language Authority. For the 2011-2012 fiscal year, Freddie Louie, band manager of the Iskut Nation, submitted a Language

Authority and Language Plan Development application to First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council that was approved. In an email to the leadership of the Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, and Tahltan Central Council, Freddie stated, "I did the application because I kept hearing how important this was to our people" (personal communication, February 3, 2012).

From what I have learned from the co-researchers, scholars who have worked with our Tahltan communities, other Indigenous community language revitalization experts, and international language revitalization scholars, much of what needs to be done to revitalize our language can be accomplished under the guidance of a language authority, so the creation of a Tahltan Language Authority is timely. From "Language Authority and Language Plan Development" (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2012), the purpose of a language authority is to:

- Govern language-related initiatives
- Approve work done on the language
- Develop language-based policies
- Take responsibility for the revitalization and future of the language
- Develop a viable and sustainable plan for community language revitalization
- Plan and implement language revitalization projects
- Certify language teachers (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2012, p. 1).

A language authority would empower our people to take control of not only the revitalization of our language, but also our education and health in regards to language revitalization. As well, with the need for human resources to both teach and develop documentation resources, this will be an important career opportunity for many of our

people. With this in mind, I am going to list suggestions that have come from the learnings.

First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council has listed "8 Steps to Community Language Revitalization: Keeping it Alive":

1. Language Status
2. Community Support
3. Research
4. Language Goals
5. Planning
6. Implement Language Projects
7. Use the Language More!
8. Keep the Language Alive (as cited in Virtue & Gessner, 2012, p. 20).

I will focus on the first three steps to provide suggestions. It is the responsibility of the Tahltan Language Authority to decide on short- and long-term goals once the first three steps have been completed. Without an overall working plan, long-term revitalization efforts may not be successful (Hornberger, 1997). The only recommendation that I would make in terms of short-term goals is to work with fluent speakers as soon as possible, as often as possible.

1. *Language status.* It is important to know the status of our Tahltan language so that we can identify our language needs. In the previous section, I began to assess the status of the Tahltan language based on usage and resources in which I listed how often and where the language is used, as well as language resources, specific to people and materials. However, more work needs to be done in assessing the status of our language.

We need to find out how many people speak and/or use our language, such as fluent speakers, semi-speakers, and learners. As of 2010, 50 speakers, 262 semi-speakers, and 248 learners of Tahltan were reported (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). While our fluent speakers are invaluable, semi-speakers are also a valuable resource: "with increased language programming they will become B.C.'s most valuable language resources" (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010, p. 19). Furthermore, since First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council (2010) has reported that the majority of learners are under the age of 25, it is hoped that they will speak their language at home and in community, thereby producing new fluent speakers (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010).

Where do these speakers, semi-speakers, and learners live? How old are they? How old are the youngest speakers (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2012)? As well, it is important to find out the attitudes that our people have about our language (Virtue & Gessner, 2012). A community language survey is an important step in language planning. As First Peoples' Cultural Council (2012) states, this type of survey can be used to:

- Understand the attitudes of all community members towards their language, and to language revitalization.
- Identify individuals who are interested in participating in the revitalization process.
- Find out what kinds of language projects community members would like to see implemented.

- Determine the degree of language knowledge and usage in the community. (For example, how many fluent speakers there are, how old they are, and how well they know the language.) (First Peoples' Cultural Council, p. 2).

2. Community support. Language revitalization requires dedication and commitment from the community and, in the words of First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council (2010), "language champions" (p. 24) – people with a passion for saving and revitalizing our language. The formation of a Tahltan Language Authority needs to include community members and other community organizations coming together to agree on a process that includes both the revitalization of the language and healing, and the acknowledgement of that connection. As Curtis Rattray states:

*I think what we need to be doing
is that we need to organize ourselves.
I think that we need to get a language authority going
with membership and things like that.
I think as part of that process, of organizing,
we need to identify what our priorities are going to be
and it should be looking at developing resource materials
but at the same time doing language programming.
I think there's a lot of really good examples going on in the province right now
with language programming.
Immersion's one of them,
but mentoring, master-apprentice program, those types of things.
That needs to be done,
but again it goes back to our communities' capacity
to organize those types of things.
I think is the biggest issue right now.
(Curtis Rattray).*

The newly formed Language Authority can assess and revise their initial goals, along with community involvement and support, and with the awareness of successful language revitalization projects that have been carried out in BC and the rest of the world.

*So now I think one of the things
we need to do is,*

*and Iskut is doing the same thing too,
 and the Stikine Wholistic Working Group,
 has shown that the direction that the community membership
 included parenting and workshops and stuff like that,
 are just as important as language.
 Language revitalization, language teaching.
 So those are all important.
 So the Tahltans, we need to get this Tahltan Language Authority going.
 And one of the things that is going to have to get done is
 to start coordinating all these language activities
 and be supports for them.
 And I don't think it should be sitting there going,
 "Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority,"
 slap their hand and say,
 "You're not allowed to do that."
 What it needs to do is to support all of these other groups
 that mandates overlap.
 And the Tahltan Language Authority needs to take the position also
 that language revitalization is integral to our healing and social development.
 It's also integral to our land claims
 and Aboriginal rights and title issues.
 (Curtis Rattray).*

Tahltan language revitalization needs to start at the community level. Language teacher

Angela Dennis stated,

*It goes back to the community to make a language come alive again,
 to even retain it.
 (Angela Dennis).*

Language teacher Pauline Hawkins spoke about a conversation she had with a Tahltan

Elder in which she spoke about the need for all Tahltans to step up in the efforts to save

our Tahltan language.

*Where else do these kids hear Tahltan besides here at school?
 Which is really unfortunate.
 I had an Elder who came over to me
 and this Elder said,
 "Oh, you're not doing anything for these kids.
 "You teach them but they're not learning."
 And I said, "You know what?
 "It's up to Elders like you who can speak Tahltan
 to speak to them and tell them, to speak to them in Tahltan,*

because I only teach them a half an hour a day.”
...But it's not up to us [teachers].
I mean, sure, I'm doing my part,
but everybody else needs to chip in – everybody.
 (Pauline Hawkins).

As Tahltan people, we need to heed the words of both Angela Dennis and Pauline Hawkins. If we want to revitalize our language, we need to start at the community level, with educational institutes being a part of that community, not taking on the main role in Tahltan language revitalization. This support needs to come from the overall community, as well as leadership and other organizations within the Tahltan community.

From a community perspective, a lot of positive work has been done, from having the Tahltan Central Council (which includes both the Tahltan Nation and Iskut Nation) supporting the development of a Tahltan Language Authority; to the signing of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement between School District 87, the five Stikine First Nations (Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, Daylu Dene Council, Dease River First Nation, Taku River Tlingit First Nation), and the Ministry of Education; to the formation of the Stikine Wholistic Working Group, to name a few.

Community awareness. We have to have the will to revitalize our language; this can only come about if our people are aware of how important our language is to us as a people; how connected our language is to our land, our Elders, our Ancestors, our identity as Tahltan people, and our well-being. David Rattray spoke about how our people need to become aware of how important and urgent it is to revitalize our language.

And we still haven't got a vision of how important it is.
So we don't have –
we'll talk until the cows come home about how important it is.
But it's, “get off your butt and do it!”
 (David Rattray).

A big part of community awareness would include promotion of the language, which would involve, in the words of Verna Kirkness (2002), raising “the consciousness level of our people” (p. 18). Curtis Rattray spoke about the need to promote our Tahltan language in our communities:

*There's a need for promotion of language
in the communities
so that the promotion is to encourage and motivate
the use of language in other parts of the community.
And even just something as simple as,
Tahltan organizations, when somebody phones,
they pick up the phone, they should be saying,
“Dūda ant'īn. Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority.”
Just start to put a little bit of our language into everyday activities.
And it needs to be done more
in the community too at community events.
(Curtis Rattray).*

Both David Rattray and Vera Asp also emphasized the need to celebrate our people in regards to our language and culture. Vera has told me that we need to “*potlatch our successes and accomplishments.*” David observed:

*The other thing we need to do,
is hold way more celebrations and ceremonies
to encourage those who are doing positive things
with our language and culture and on our land
and to honour them more.
It was neat because this year,
it was one of the first times we honoured
some of our members for work they did.
They blockaded a road for hunting
and a bunch of people blockaded
so everyone of them got a vest or coat to acknowledge what they did.
And to me,
those kind of ceremonies are so important
because it gets people to feel good about themselves.
(David Rattray).*

Having people modeling the use of our language is also an effective way of promoting our language to our people. Chief Marie Quock of the Iskut Nation is the only

fluent speaker amongst the three local leaders and her speech in the Tahltan language, entitled “Honouring Our Ancestors,” was important to two of the co-researchers in my study. After the opening ceremony was over, I spoke with Pauline Hawkins, the language teacher in Telegraph Creek, and she was clearly affected by Marie’s speech.

*Now to answer your question
on what it felt like to hear Marie speak Tahltan so fluently,
it was amazing and an inspiration.
My first words were, “ I want to sound like that someday.”
I don’t know exactly how to describe it other than
it really made me want to learn more
and be proud of who I am.
I am a Tahltan woman,
my Ancestors fought for this land that I live on today.
Hearing someone so young speak was an inspiration to say the least.
I think a lot of people may have felt that also.
I know that it has had an impact on my students as well.
For the last three years I was struggling to engage my Grades 6-9 students
in learning their language.
I’ve noticed a change in them since.
Now they are eager to learn more
and they are trying harder.
(Pauline Hawkins.)*

I spoke with Marie after that and told her how important it was to not only Pauline, but to all of us trying to learn our Tahltan language. Marie is someone we can all look up to and someone who can serve as a role model to all Tahltan language learners. From the perspective of a Tahltan Elder, Jenny Quock, who is a fluent Tahltan speaker, Marie’s speech was important for other reasons:

*Like what my daughter [in-law] Marie did.
But it was really awesome.
I really want,
I really love what Marie did,
so the older people could understand.
Like people that have been to college and university everywhere,
they come up to us and make meeting.
And they talk their high language.
We don’t know what they’re saying.*

*We don't even know.
 'Cause we've never been to college or university and stuff like that.
 And some words they use are too powerful for us Elders to listen to.
 That's why I'm really happy with Marie.
 It's the kind of leader we want,
 that one who can speak their language.*
 (Jenny Quock).

Not only is it important to have our leaders speak our language so that our Elders feel more involved and included, a positive way to promote the language is to have our leaders learning the language along with community members in a more formal, structured situation. One answer could be to take adult evening courses, such as the university course developed by Northwest Community College. Community events should also include opportunities for community members to hear, speak, and see the language.

There are many ways in which to promote our language. One example is the children's t-shirt that was produced by the Iskut Head Start program. Other examples are designing posters and pens that say, "Speak your language" (C. Rattray, personal communication, September 28, 2010). The main thing, in the words of Indigenous scholar Verna Kirkness (2002), is to "raise the consciousness level of our people" (p. 18). "To save our languages, there is a need to ensure that our people know why our languages are nearing extinction and why our languages are so important to our lives and to who we are" (Kirkness, 2002, p.18).

Leadership/organizations. In terms of Tahltan leadership – the Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, and Tahltan Central Council – all three organizations are in support of both the development of a Tahltan Language Authority and the revitalization of our language.

The two Tahltan health authorities – Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority and Iskut Valley Health Services –, along with the Stikine Wholistic Working Group, understand the connection between the process of community healing with that of cultural revitalization and language revitalization. Because of this understanding, they have taken on a key role in preserving and revitalizing Tahltan language and culture by organizing culture camps that have provided language speaking and education opportunities for Tahltan community members. Such camps provide communities with a way in which to carry out traditional cultural activities in the language across generations of community members at the same time. (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010).

School District 87 (Stikine), the Ministry of Education, and the five First Nations whose territory School District 87 serves (Tahltan Nation, Iskut Nation, Daylu Dena Council, Dease River First Nation, and Taku River Tlingit First Nation) have all signed an Enhancement Agreement whose purpose is to ensure that the Aboriginal learners in the school district are able to attain high levels of emotional, spiritual, physical and intellectual success (School District 87 (Stikine), 2010). This agreement provides an opportunity for both the ministry and the school district to show their support in regards to First Nations and their languages.

Christine Ball, Director of Health Programs for the Tahltan Health and Social Services Authority, spoke about the importance of having language lessons at the beginning of each workday at the Health clinic, as well as the band office, which is another way that institutions can show support for Tahltan language revitalization.

3. Research. An important role of a language authority is to carry out research, such as finding out what resources are available, researching the language, and finding out what other language revitalization programs are doing (First Peoples' Cultural Council, 2012). I'm hoping that the Tahltan Language Authority can use what I have learned from this study and that the learnings can contribute to research that they will carry out.

It is also important to get support from other nations who have been through the process of getting a language authority off the ground. A suggestion would be to invite such experts from other nations to speak with the community members responsible for the formation of a Tahltan Language Authority.

As well, the Tahltan Language Authority should send Tahltan community members to symposiums, workshops and other scholarly meetings dealing with language revitalization so that those representatives can share, learn, and network with other people with the same interest in revitalizing Indigenous languages. Some examples of conferences are: Stabilizing Indigenous Languages Symposium (the 19th symposium was just held at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC from May 17-19, 2012); the Chief Atahm Immersion School Language Conference (the 11th conference was held at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC, from May 5-7, 2011; Athabaskan/Dene Languages Conference (the 20th conference will be held at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington on August 15-17, 2012); and Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation (3rd annual conference will be held at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa campus from February 28-March 3, 2013).

Healing. It is vital that healing take place concurrently with language revitalization. As David Rattray has stated, so many of our people are in pain due to the affects of colonization, assimilation, and residential school experiences, as well as the intergenerational transmission of that pain. That pain can be a huge barrier to language revitalization. I repeat some of his words to emphasize this point:

*The amount of emotional pain that exists is so horrific
that I personally,
when we talk about language revitalization,
we have to factor in a huge healing component.*

*I believe you need to have a huge focus on healing
if you're going to revitalize the language.
Language is too difficult to learn and use,
with all the pain elements that flow through our world.*

*There is so much pain in our Nation
that language revitalization,
while it gets a lot of verbal –
“we've got to do it,”
when you sit back
and watch them
try to implement it,
it's extremely difficult
because there's too much pain in our communities.
(David Rattray).*

Curtis Rattray also adds,

*And the Tahltan Language Authority needs to take the position also
that language revitalization is integral to our healing and social development.
(Curtis Rattray).*

The Tahltan Language Authority will need to carry out research to see what other nations have done in regards to healing programs. As well, the Tahltan Language Authority will need to work closely with the two Tahltan health authorities, along with the Stikine Wholistic Working Group, in order to carry out this research and to make

decisions on the best healing approaches that will work best with language revitalization. Educators and counsellors also need to be involved in this process.

Language Programs. An important component of language revitalization is to provide as many opportunities for communities to learn and use their language. One of the areas that I have learned about during this study is about the different language programming that is available for different ages. Some of the programming takes place within the school system, while others are community driven. It is important that all of the language programming start at the community level with our people being the driving force behind the organization and implementation.

Children/Youth. Children and youth include newborns to 18 years of age.

Pre-school programs. While having Janet Vance visit the Aboriginal Head Start Program in Telegraph Creek a few times a week to teach the language for 15 minutes at a time, there is a need for more language to be taught to this children at this crucial age. While Aboriginal Head Start programs target children ages 3 to 5, our children need to be learning the Tahltan language as soon as they are born. My grandmother Julia Callbreath knew the importance of learning our Tahltan language at an early age:

My dad was white;
He never allowed my mother to teach us.
They always say,
“Let them learn English first, before they learn their own language.”
Well, that’s not right.
The younger you are,
the easier it is to learn that language.
(personal communication, December 29, 1999).

This sentiment has been supported by Tahltan educator David Rattray:

*The other thing that’s really critical
is when you look at language development
you realize that these kids*

have to hear it before they're five years old.
(David Rattray).

Fluent speaker and retired language teacher Janet Vance adds,

*That's the best way to teach them,
when they're little.
You know why?
Because it's in their blood.*
(Janet Vance).

Granny, David, and Janet are in good company as Fishman (1996), Lee (1996), and Stiles (1997) also concur that early childhood is the best time for language learning to occur.

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996) states that the first three years of a child's life are critical in regards to laying the foundation of sound making and that "young children absorb information at a greater rate than at any other stage of life" (Vol. 3, p. 447). According to linguist Marianne Ignace (1998), babies begin to acquire language within months of being born, and by the age of five, they have mastered the basic sound system and grammar of their mother tongue. Therefore, it is crucial to focus on early childhood programs that involve young children and their parents (Fishman, 1991). One method that has been successful in other parts of the world is early childhood language immersion programming, more commonly known as a "language nest" program (McIvor, 2005). Such immersion preschool programs are conducted entirely in the ancestral language of an Indigenous group.

Language nest programs originated in Aotearoa (New Zealand) in the early 1980s, with their early-childhood language immersion program, Te Kōhanga Reo, being developed by the Maori community in an effort to have their children speak fluently in their language (King, 2001; Kirkness, 1998; Te Kōhanga Reo National Trust, 2010). Considered to be one of the most successful language revitalization programs globally,

Te Kōhanga Reo has inspired other Indigenous groups to follow their lead (King, 2001; Hinton, 2001b). One group in particular was a small group of Hawaiian educators and community members who modeled their 'Aha Pūnana Leo (Hawaiian language nests) after the Maori Te Kōhanga Reo ('Aha Pūnana Leo, 2006; Hinton, 2001a; Warner, 2001).

One example of a pre-school language nest located in British Columbia is the Stó:lo Nation's Halq'emeylem Pre-School Language Nest (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010). Another example is *Xwmelech'stn' Estimiaw'txw*, Capilano Littlest Ones School, which is operated by the Squamish Nation Department of Education (Baker-Williams, 2006).

Onowa McIvor's master's thesis, *Building the nests: Indigenous language revitalization in Canada through early childhood immersion programs* (2005) provides recommendations that could be used to implement a Tahltan language nest. After learning from two Aboriginal communities in British Columbia who implemented language nests, McIvor's recommendations deal with having strong leadership at a community and individual level; participation of fluent speakers; parental involvement; support for teachers; and practical aspects, such as "keeping the approach simple" (p. 69) and capital resources and funding issues.

While Aboriginal Head Start programs target children ages 3 to 5, perhaps this provincial organization could work with the community to facilitate a language nest with an age range of newborn to 5.

Another way in which to have newborns and toddlers learning the language is to have parents speaking the language in the home. If parents are not fluent speakers, we need to ensure that adults have access to ways of learning the language.

K-12 school programs. As was mentioned in the last section on assessment, the language is taught from grades K-9 in Iskut and Telegraph Creek and K-12 in Dease Lake. In these language classes, the language teachers are developing lessons as they go. These courses are not accredited and do not have learning outcomes prescribed for them by the Ministry of Education. Because there has been no formal development of K-12 curriculum, curriculum needs to be developed for many levels of language learners, as well as for different grade levels. Angela Dennis, spoke about the lack of language curriculum.

*And one of the things that is a really big stumbling block for me
when teaching it in the classroom
is I have to produce all of my own material.
A lot of language teachers find that,
at other places,
find it really frustrating too.
There's not that many resources around for us.
It's always –
bring someone along to help develop it in your community
or develop it yourself.
It's always like that.
(Angela Dennis).*

After speaking with the Tahltan language teachers, they unanimously felt that the Tahltan language should be an accredited program and given the same recognition as other teachable subject areas. Such a program would be similar to the program that is already in place in the schools, where the language is taught as a subject for a limited time. One way to create more opportunities for the Tahltan language to be used is to allot more time for it in the classroom. “An hour a day, if taught with appropriate methodology, can bring children a long way toward fluency” (Hinton, 2001c, p. 7). However, what would make this program different is that Tahltan language curriculum would be designed, developed and implemented for all grades, Kindergarten to Grade 12. As well, the BC

Ministry of Education would recognize this language program as an approved curriculum, ensuring that both an Integrated Resource Package and Prescribed Learning Outcomes were developed, as it is for other accredited curriculum. If this is not done, the teaching of the Tahltan language in schools is not deemed to be as important, and in the words of linguist Leanne Hinton, this puts language courses at a disadvantage:

“Schools have a structure and a required agenda that allows language teaching only a small role compared to those played by the more favored subjects of math, reading, and so on” (Hinton, 2001b, p. 7). The Tahltan language classes currently taught in our communities are not part of an accredited program sanctioned by the BC Ministry of Education. Because the language courses and the resources are considered supplemental, teachers often do not have the time to implement anything outside of what they are required to teach by law. With the development of an accredited language program, students would be given credit for their language courses, Tahltan would be seen as a viable language course for university requirements, but most importantly, this would give more respect to our language as a school subject.

The Enhancement Agreement between School District 87 (Stikine), the Ministry of Education, and the five Stikine First Nations (which includes the two Tahltan nations) is where the ministry and the school district can show their support in regards to First Nations and their languages. In the Enhancement Agreement (School District 87, 2010), it states:

The development of language and culture resources will be primarily the responsibility of the First Nations. The School District will work with the First

Nations to support and encourage the development of language and cultural curricula, and employ language instructors where possible (p. 6).

While this is a necessary first step, the language and cultural curriculum need to become part of the education standards set by the Ministry of Education. Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs) need to be written that outline what a student is expected to know and be able to do at each grade level in that subject area. They also provide the teacher with the framework in regards to what they need to adhere to as part of their instruction (Ministry of Education, 2011). In this way, the language and cultural curriculum is seen to be a crucial part of overall curriculum and not just an add-on or an elective.

There is much that School District 87 and the Tahltan community can learn from School District 52 (Prince Rupert)'s Sm'algyax Language Program. With the signing of the Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement on November 9, 2010, School District 87 and the two Tahltan nations can focus on the steps already taken and steps that are planned for the development of an accredited Tahltan language program. The Aboriginal Enhancement Agreement (School District 87, 2010) speaks to the support and cooperation the school district will have with the First Nations of the Stikine. Using School District 52's model, a body similar to School District 52's Sm'aygyax Language Committee should be struck.

During my experiences in School District 52 as a student in grades K-12, as a pre-service teacher-in-training, and as an Aboriginal educator working closely with the district's Aboriginal Education Department, I have seen this program develop and grow. School District 52's Language Committee works closely with the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority "to design, develop, implement, and evaluate Aboriginal language

and culture programs” (2011b). The development of a Tahltan language committee could work with the newly formed Tahltan Language Authority to provide support in developing a Tahltan language program within School District 87 (Stikine).

Another positive feature of School District 52’s Sm’algyax Language Program is their team-teaching approach. The team is made up of a certified teacher of Ts’msyen descent who is not a fluent speaker, and a fluent speaker of Ts’msyen descent who has been certified by the BC College of Teachers upon recommendation of their Ts’msyen Sm’algyax Language Authority. “Such teams provide a mixture of freshness and experience with several types of expertise, and transform the classroom into a community of learners where students as well as their teachers are constantly learning with and from each other” (Afifi, 2003, p. 19).

Immersion programs. Schools need to find a way to get their students out on the land with Elders and fluent speakers more often so that they can learn about the connection between language and land. Angela Dennis spoke about not getting many chances to get out of the classroom with students. Because class time is limited (20-30 minutes), she cannot just take one group of students out without being away from other language classes. She would like the opportunity to take students out on the land to teach them about traditional activities in conjunction with the language, while ensuring that her other classes do not miss out on their language session. This means making sure that there is a qualified person to cover her classes while she is away.

*And I know that a lot of the times,
being in the classroom myself,
it’s hard for me to just up and take the kids out because of policies,
all the hoops you have to go through.
And I noticed that it’s really hard for me
to get a replacement to cover me when I go out.*

Those are always issues that I have to face.

And there's times when I wanted to take someone else with me [to language teacher-training]

so that way I could have a back-up person who could come into the classroom, and not be afraid,

and just be able to pick up whatever I leave for them

and teach it like a substitute teacher.

(Angela Dennis).

One way in which to solve Angela's dilemma is to support the development of school immersion programs.

At this time, in all of the schools in the three Tahltan communities, children are only allotted 20-30 minutes per day of Tahltan language instruction. Oscar Dennis, a past student of the Klappan Independent Day School and a parent of children who have also attended the school in Iskut, talked about the need for our language to be an integral part of the whole curriculum and not just an add-on:

*When you look at the whole thing
and you look at the curriculum over there
and it's supposed to be an Indian,
you know,*

*Iskut Indian controlled school,
and yet,*

our culture is allotted 20 minutes per day?

It's a joke; it's a tragedy.

*You know, they go through the regular curriculum,
which is solidified on this colonial structure, you know.*

*And it's one of the main institutions that condition our children to accept this rule
that we're given in this colonial culture society.*

*And then here's this big curriculum of Western curriculum
being looked at from the Western perspective*

and somewhere along the line there's a little gap for ours

and then back to the regular colonial mentality

and colonial structure in this institution.

So it never works, you know?

(Oscar Dennis).

Fluent speaker and retired language teacher Janet Vance spoke of the importance of getting the students out of the classroom and out on the land.

*You can teach them all you want, you know.
It's not real to them because it's –
what they need is hands-on learning.
That's what I told the principal.
But no, I was told
you can't teach the language outside the school,
except in school.
The only time I can do it is when we're on camping trips.
And they were free, like you never believe,
talking and laughing.
They tried to speak,
to say things better than each other!
But when they were in that school,
like they didn't want to say it.
Besides, they're not seeing what you're talking about.
It's gotta be there before they can understand.*

*They don't like classrooms.
I always tried to tell them that, you know.
Classroom is just like they forced to do things.
But when we were out in the camp,
they weren't forced to do nothing.
I speak my language to them
and tell them what I say,
then they do it next time.
I tell them in our language,
they know exactly what to do!
Didn't have to tell them over and over and over
like in the classroom.
'Cause it's not happening there.
But out there,
they're seeing it and they're learning it and doing it.
(Janet Vance)*

One way to have language and culture be an integral part of our children's education is to implement a K-12 immersion program.

*I think children should be learning it everywhere.
There should be all these opportunities created to use and learn the language.
I think children can become this core of safe environment to do our language
because nobody,*

there's very limited people who will bring negativity into a class with children. People inherently want to keep the positive around children so I think that if we use that kind of situation to revitalize our language, it's the place to go. And I think we need to do it as early as possibly daycare, kindergarten, grade one, and I think these things should be immersion. I mean, to teach children how to have fun and play and count and stuff like that can be done in any language and it should be in Tahltan. And then the other thing it does then is it forces the community now to be able to have the capacity and the resources to allocate into these headstart and kindergarten to be able to provide that kind of educational environment in our language. (Curtis Rattray).

One Aboriginal language immersion school located in BC is the Secwepemc Nation's Chief Atahm School located on the Adams Lake Reserve (Chief Atahm School, 2011; Ignace, 1998). Beginning as a language nest in 1987, the success of that early childhood immersion program led to the creation of Chief Atahm School four years later (Chief Atahm School, 2011). This school offers full immersion programming for pre-school, nursery/kindergarten, and grades 1-3. Partial programming in the Secwepemc language occurs in grades 4-9. Secwepemc researcher Kathryn Michel provides stories of her involvement, as well as community members who worked together to develop the Chief Atahm School, in her doctoral dissertation, *Trickster's path to language transformation: Stories of Secwepemc immersion from Chief Atahm School* (2012).

An international example is the Kula Kaiapuni K-12 Hawaiian language immersion program. This successful program has provided the opportunity to revitalize the Hawaiian language and culture, to create and develop more schools to teach the Hawaiian language, for Hawaiian children to learn their language, culture, story,

traditional knowledge, and histories, and to provide a template for other Indigenous peoples involved in language revitalization (Warner, 2001).

Another American example is the Cuts Wood Blackfeet K-8 immersion school on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, which has been in existence for two decades (Kipp, 2009). The ultimate success is reflected in the numbers: there were no children able to speak the Blackfoot language back in 1994—now they have had 100 children attending immersion school for at least three years, 15 graduating after nine years, 24 proficient level speaking students completed studies, and one graduating on to a public high school (Kipp, 2009).

In her master's thesis, Haley DeKorne (2009a) analyzed regional, national and international policies affecting Indigenous language education in both Canadian and American public schools. DeKorne provided recommendations for the development of future policies, including the development of immersion language teacher training and Indigenous control over Indigenous language education.

Parents/Adults. Curtis Rattray speaks to the importance of having a way for parents to access the language.

*The other thing that we need to be doing is
allowing places for parents to access the language.
You know, so that they can start having language skills also.
And we're looking at,
in a lot of cases now,
you've got parents,
young parents who've already been a part of the second language
Tahltan language classes now
so there is some of the knowledge.
But it's also about promoting and encouraging the parents to use the language at home.
Giving them the kind of skills and experiences and opportunities
to be exposed to the language for the parents.
And so when the children come home,
for them [the parents] to be using the language.*

(Curtis Rattray).

Taking Tahltan language courses can help parents make a connection with their children and their children's learning of the language, not only in school, but also with the parents acting as teachers of the language in the home. Parents may need assistance in how to promote the speaking of the language in the home, and a suggestion would be to have a manual developed that could help assist with that.

Post-secondary programs. In regards to learning the language, it is imperative that the language be spoken in the home. Retired Tahltan language teacher Patrick Carlick has said,

*In order to keep that language going
you have to speak it at home.
Don't matter you teach it at school,
you should bring it home with you.
And we have to start using it, start using it again.*
(Patrick Carlick).

In order to teach these adult language conversation courses, the ideal situation would be to have a fluent speaker who has classroom experience teach it. Unfortunately, the only person who is capable of fulfilling such a role, and who is not retired, is Angela Dennis. She already spoke of her reluctance to teach such courses on her own. A solution would be to have a trained teacher of Tahltan descent co-teaching with a fluent Tahltan speaker in the classroom. At Northwest Community College, three conversation courses of Sm'algyax 101 have been taught by a team: a BC College of Teachers certified teacher/non-fluent speaker who is of Ts'msyen descent who is working with a fluent speaker of the language. The Sm'algyax 101 course offering in Prince Rupert was taught by a fluent speaker who was certified by the BC College of Teachers upon the recommendation of the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Language Authority. Such an approach to

language teaching can be adapted for the Tahltan language, as we don't have many fluent speakers who are able to teach without assistance.

Master-apprentice program. First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council is supporting a Tahltan Master-Apprentice team. Tahltan learner Odelia Dennis began working with fluent speaker Andy Louie and semi-fluent speaker Erma Bourquin in the first year, and is now working with fluent speakers Angela Dennis and Regina Louie. In her second year of the Master-Apprentice program, Odelia is also teaching what she is learning to her young child. The Master-Apprentice Language Learning Method is presented, discussed, and outlined in *How to keep your language alive: A commonsense approach to one-on-one language learning* (Hinton et al., 2002). This method provides a way for individuals to learn their Indigenous language from a native speaker when there are no formal classes available. Unlike other methods, this one can be more individually based. It usually involves one speaker and one learner working together for 10 to 20 hours a week for several years. Some of the principles of the Master-Apprentice System include: no speaking English; no translation between the Aboriginal language and English; speaking the language is more important than writing it; and the importance of the apprentice being an active member of the team. Hinton states that after two to three years of working together, that the learner, or "apprentice" can become conversationally proficient.

The First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council has provided funding to interested and motivated individuals who would like to learn their language using the model of the Master-Apprentice Language Learning Method. The goal of the program is to:

Facilitate the development of fluent speakers of B.C. First Nations languages through a Master-Apprentice Program (300 hours) where elders/speakers are partnered with committed learners in an immersion environment in the home and on the land. This is a one-on-one program (one master and one learner program) (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010).

Through this funding, master-apprentice teams are working together around the province, such as a mother-daughter team from the Stó:lo Nation working with the Halq'emeylem language (First Peoples' Heritage, Language and Culture Council, 2010) and Trish Rosborough, a University of British Columbia Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy (EDD) student who is working with a fluent speaker on the Kwak'wala language (T. Rosborough, personal communication, December 12, 2010).

The next call for proposals for the Master-Apprentice Program is expected to come in Spring 2013. It is important that as many Tahltan teams apply for this funding as possible.

In her 2012 doctoral dissertation, Cree scholar Onowa McIvor (2012) used an autoethnographic account of her language learning journey chronicling over a decade. Her research could be most helpful to the Tahltan Language Authority as much of her research speaks to urban adult Indigenous learning in Canada, the inclusion of Indigenous adult learners in the Indigenous language revitalization movement, and adult Indigenous language learning. She also writes about the need for research that considers the family – which would include children, parents, and other generations if available – as the “primary learning site for language revitalization” (p. 206).

All ages. Activities and organized events that provide a way for all generations to carry out traditional cultural activities in the language are especially powerful.

Language and culture camps. As has been stated before, the two Tahltan health authorities, along with the Stikine Wholistic Group, have taken on a key role in language revitalization by organizing language and culture camps that provide opportunities for Tahltan community members to hear and speak Tahltan when carrying out cultural activities. It also provides a way to bring all generations together. The Tahltan Language Authority can play a part in this by ensuring that language and culture camps are part of their planning. As well, they can provide guidance and structure, similar to what our people have asked for, which Curtis Rattray has articulated:

*And so what they were describing in the session in Telegraph Creek
out at the culture camp was that they wanted to see more
language programming and cultural programming,
like formalized, scheduled activities.
And with organized instructors and facilities and resources
all there so all you need to do is
just the people show up and the instructor does their thing.
It it's tanning moose hide, the language should be part of that.
And also you have just language tents
or parts of the camp or the whole camp
where it's nothing but language.
(Curtis Rattray).*

Cultural activities. David Rattray spoke to me about how cultural activities, such as song and dance, can be entry points into language.

*There's 195 Tahltan songs over in the archives in Ottawa
that Teit taped in 1910-1912, on wax cylinders.
and I got my hands on a couple of the tapes
and I'd like to get them put onto CDs and cleaned up
and then get someone to translate them.
Those are the entry points,
I believe, into language.
Places where the kids feel really good about what they're doing.
And so those are the kinds of entry points*

*to the language,
 the cultural activities that we used to do.
 If we can bring some more of them back
 and do things on the land,
 those are the entry points.
 Doing it just in the school is very, very, very ineffective.
 They should be learning it at school, home, and on the land.
 All three different places,
 then they have to have a healthy blend of them all.*
 (David Rattray).

Natalie Baloy (2011) echoes David's sentiments about song being an entry point to language, as is dance. In her Master's thesis, *Exploring the potential for Native language revitalization in an urban context: Language education in Vancouver*, her research participants viewed their involvement with singing and dancing as a less threatening way to learn language. Research participant Gayle Buchanan states, "Teaching in that formal set-up that we use for learning languages...doesn't give those students an opportunity to practice and carry on. But with songs, some of the words can stick with them for the rest of their lives" (as cited in Baloy, 2011, p. 535). In regards to applying for traditional culture programming, research participant Kway'Waat stated,

We allow the community to do those types of projects that [will] promote language.... I've heard communities say, "Well, if we didn't have this traditional song class, learning the language while we're doing it, it never would have sparked the whole community." It never would have motivated [them] (as cited in Baloy, 2011, p 535).

In her master's thesis, *Yohahí:yo Yakothahol^:u: She has found a good path: A discussion of commitment to Onyota'a:ka language revitalization*, Onyota'a:ka researcher Adrianna Poulette (2007) writes about the connection between language and song on a personal level.

Because of the strong effect the water drum has had on me personally, I began to connect language and song as having a commonality and being equal. I then began to logically apply this commonality to land, ceremony, and medicine. All of the aspects of the Onyota'a:ka way of life share the commonality of communicative sound (p. 57).

Poulette (2007) quotes one of her friends, Lo:t^t who speaks about the connection between language, song, and culture.

It's all a part of culture. When we talk about culture, language and songs are a part of that. You cannot separate those things. You cannot separate language, you cannot separate singing, and you cannot separate ceremony. All of those things are a part of who we are. That is what we are taught (p. 62).

Our community needs to embrace song and dance by providing opportunities for all ages to take part in cultural activities that include the use of our Tahltan language. The Tahltan Language Authority can play a role in that by ensuring that such cultural activities are part of their planning.

Human resources. An important area in which the newly formed Tahltan Language Authority can play a crucial role is in the training and certifying of our people when it comes to language.

Certification of language teachers. From my conversations with the current language teachers, the importance of having a Tahltan Language Authority was emphasized. When asked what needed to be done now to save our language, Loretta Quock-Sort was very adamant about the need for a Tahltan Language Authority to be put in place (personal communication, November 19, 2009). First Nations Language

Authorities are recognized by the BC College of Teachers. Once a language authority has been established, this body has the ability to recommend proficient speakers of their language be given a First Nations Language Certificate. By having this valid BC teaching certification, these speakers are able to teach in BC schools so that they can pass on their language to future generations. Without this certification, there are often individuals who are taking on the role of language teacher but not given the credentials, pay, or professional development that is accorded to teachers in the public school system. In Dease Lake, Loretta Quock-Sort was given the title of “Aboriginal Language and Cultural Assistant, ” which is now Sonia Dennis’ title. It is the same for Pauline Hawkins in the Tahltan School in Telegraph Creek. With this job title, individuals are hired as staff members to play a supportive role and to “assist teachers in developing, preparing, presenting, and integrating Aboriginal language/cultural activities into the regular curriculum” (School District 87, 2008). In both cases, Pauline and Sonia, and Loretta before that, have been carrying out the responsibilities of a certified teacher without the recognition or pay.

If a Language Authority is not in place to recommend language teachers for BC certification, then language teachers for that language cannot apply for a First Nations Language Teaching Certificate. Without a language authority in place, the only other option to have these language teachers recognized is for the school district to apply for a Letter of Permission (LoP) through the BC College of Teachers.

*We need the Aboriginal Language & Culture Assistants in our District
to be certified within our jobs
or to hold an LoP.
(Loretta Quock-Sort).*

LoPs allow the school district to hire an individual who does not hold a BC College of Teachers teaching certificate (BC College of Teachers, 2011). The LoP is only valid for one year, and is specific to a particular individual, school, and teaching assignment. If a Tahltan Language Authority were put into place, the school district would have no need to apply for a LoP. The Tahltan Language Authority would have the power to recognize Tahltan language teachers by recommending their certification to the BC College of Teachers.

Teacher Training. Pauline Hawkins feels that as a language teacher who is not certified with the BC College of Teachers, she needs more training and support from her school district. Loretta Quock-Sort, whose situation was identical to Pauline's, had the same concerns. As was noted previously, because the language teachers are considered to be support staff, they are not provided with as much professional development as they feel they need. However, this past May 2011, Pauline Hawkins was able to attend the 11th Annual Chief Atahm Immersion School Language Conference at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC. Language teachers need to be provided with professional development experiences by both the community and their employee.

Curtis Rattray spoke about the work that the First Nations Education Steering Committee is doing in regards to developing a full Aboriginal Language Teacher Education Program to address the needs of language teachers who are not certified and/or fluent speakers of the language.

*We're developing an Aboriginal Languages Teacher Program,
Teacher Education Program.
And what we want to do is
to take the existing DSTC [Developmental Standard Term Certificate]
that's in place right now
and we want to expand it to a full teacher education program*

*as an Aboriginal language teacher,
so you can come out with a teaching degree
but you also be a fluent speaker in the language.*

*We're at a situation right now
where the bulk of the language teachers are retiring
or near retirement.
If I remember correctly,
the statistics are around 56% of the language teachers
that conducted the interview and survey
are 20 years plus in the job.*

*We're heading in that direction
where the Tahltans are right now,
where two of the three language teachers are not fluent.
And so any education language program
is going to have to address that need
and we need to do that quickly
because I think those fluent language teachers
have done their time and I think they need to retire.
And, but I also think,
what their energies and focus should be is no longer on K to 12,
they should be on teaching the new generation of teachers
and that's where their energies should be put in.
(Curtis Rattray).*

In regards to the Developmental Standard Term Certificate in First Nations Language and Culture (DSTC) that Curtis mentioned, this is a program that was developed by First Nations communities, the First Nations Education Steering Committee, and the BC College of Teachers in which students are required to enroll in 90 credit hours of course work at post-secondary institutions (First Nations Education Steering Committee, n.d.). Since it began in 1999, eight First Nations organizations have partnered with post-secondary institutions to offer this program. The Tahltan Language Authority should look into the logistics of offering such a program.

As is common in many Aboriginal communities, fluent speakers are often unable to teach the endangered language because most are elderly and don't have the teaching

experience. Thus, non-fluent speakers are often employed to take on the task (Hinton, 2003). In “How to teach when the teacher isn’t fluent” (2003), linguist Leanne Hinton provides some basics for teaching language conversation and assistance in developing effective lesson plans for teachers who are not fluent in the language. She acknowledges how difficult language teaching can be, regardless of the teacher’s fluency, but that there is a lot of preparation that the non-fluent teacher needs to do before they go into the classroom. In the case of Loretta Quock-Sort, Pauline Hawkins, and Sonia Dennis, they are neither certified language teachers nor fluent speakers of the Tahltan language. Because of this, they need the support of their school district and their community more than ever in order to successfully and confidently carry out the important language work that they have taken on. It is important to have qualified teachers as well as having a number of other educational and/or language professionals (e.g. curriculum developers, linguists, language researchers, etc.) in order to provide support for each other and input into language policy is also crucial (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001).

It is important to provide teachers with the linguistic and pedagogical training to teach Aboriginal languages (Johns & Mazurkewich, 2001). Language teaching needs to focus on authentic language use and on teaching discourse skills (Omaggio Hadley, 2001). In my conversation with Angela Dennis, she spoke about a language teaching method that she has used in the classroom, called Total Physical Response.

*I use a lot of immersion stuff.
I use it in our language program here.
It’s called Total Physical Response, TPR,
I use it a lot with the kids,
I get them moving around and doing stuff.
Like, to say “put your coat on, hang your coat,
put your coat away, or your shirt or your pants” or whatever.
That’s how I use it, that’s how I teach it.*

*Because it's the most natural way to learn,
because you can't teach anyone to speak the language
by just rote learning
by isolated words
or even a word list.
You can't separate cultural activities and language activities.
(Angela Dennis).*

Total Physical Response (TPR) is an approach to language learning, developed by James J. Asher (2003). It is based on the concept that the integration of information and skills can be greatly increased through the use of the kinaesthetic sensory system.

Asher's *Learning another language through actions* (2003) is divided into three sections:

1) Asher describes the problem that people experience regarding second language learning and then presents an instructional strategy based upon the kinaesthetic sensory system, the TPR approach; 2) is a question-and-answer section, which is devoted to anticipated questions asked by teachers about the approach; and 3) includes a series of lesson plans by Carol Adamski in which she applied the total physical response approach in an English-as-Second Language class.

Points for successful language teaching are outlined by Hinton (2003): 1) speak in the language as much as possible and focus on nonverbal communication instead of switching to English to translate your instructions; 2) for communication outside of the lesson, communicate in the language as much as possible; 3) teach a few words per lesson and vary the activities in lessons to follow in order to practice the vocabulary; 4) have language routines that allow real communication, such as greetings and the weather; and 5) stress the importance of the non-fluent teacher working closely with a fluent speaker to learn the necessary language for each lesson.

Community training. If the language teachers are not fluent speakers of their language, it is vital that they have fluent speakers coming into their classroom on a regular basis. Even if the teacher is a fluent speaker, other fluent speakers should be coming to the classroom so that the students can hear their language spoken conversationally and by different people. Jenny Quock, a fluent speaker and retired Aboriginal Head Start teacher, feels that fluent speakers should be going into the classroom to assist the teachers. Speaking about the language classes in the Klappan School in Iskut, Jenny Quock stated:

*Elders should go there every once,
maybe twice a week and help Angela.
Talk and those kids will listen to their Elders.
And when, if you tell stories,
stuff like that,
those kids will really listen.*
(Jenny Quock).

While it is crucial to train language teachers within the K-12 system, it is also important to ensure that fluent speakers who are going into K-12 and post-secondary classrooms to teach Aboriginal language courses are trained and feel both confident and competent. In Brock Pitawanakwat's (2009) dissertation, one of his co-researchers, Barb Nolan, spoke about the need to assist fluent speakers in the classroom: "We need to train these people, we've got to train them how to speak to [learners] and then provide them with some incentive as well. That's where financial resources are needed" (p. 210).

In my conversation with Angela Dennis, she spoke about the need to have language teacher training programs, not only for the current language teachers, but also for back-up teachers or Teachers on Call who would replace the regular language teachers. This is so that the persons filling in for the language teachers would feel

confident and be proficient in the duties that they would be expected to carry out in the language classroom. This would benefit not only the teacher, but the on-call teacher and the students as well. It is also important to train community members as language support workers in the classroom.

There are language and language revitalization programs offered around the province, and in other parts of the world, which would benefit our people. While not exhaustive, I will list examples of such courses and programs that are being offered.

As was mentioned earlier, at Northwest Community College, I developed two first-year Tahltan language conversation courses. As well, I have developed and taught a first-year course entitled, “Aboriginal Languages – Preservation and Revitalization.”

The University of Northern British Columbia offers a certificate in First Nations Language. As well, they offer language courses for many of the languages of the First Nations territories that their mandate covers, and in the past, there has been interest in teaching Tahltan. As well, they offer two courses that focus on First Nations Language Immersion (FNST 223, FNST 324).

The University of Victoria offers several programs in Indigenous Language Revitalization: Certificate in Language Revitalization, Bachelor of Education in Indigenous Language Revitalization, Graduate Certificate and Master’s Degree in Indigenous Language Revitalization.

The University of British Columbia’s First Nations Languages Program offers courses in several First Nations languages (but not Tahltan at this point), as well as develops educational language materials and carries out research on BC’s Aboriginal

languages, in conjunction with First Nations communities and institutions. They offer a fourth-year course in Endangered Language Documentation and Revitalization.

Massachusetts Institute of Technology has an Indigenous Language Initiative, which offers The Ken Hale Memorial Master's Program, where a community could send more than one student to the Boston post-secondary institute for two years to learn about the linguistics of their language and to be able to carry out both scholarly and practical work in their language.

The University of Arizona offers a Master of Arts in Native American Languages and Linguistics, with the focus being on Indigenous languages and communities.

Depending on the program, some post-secondary institutes are willing to teach the courses in the communities if they are able to get a cohort with a certain number of students. The Tahltan Language Authority should reach out to post-secondary institutes to see what the possibilities are about offering courses in our territory.

Documentation resources. Much work needs to be done in terms of documentation and recording of the Tahltan language. While the product that would come from such work is important (e.g. dictionaries, etc), the actual process is more important as it brings together fluent speakers, with the vast majority being elderly, with the younger generation. I will write more about the process of language revitalization in the next section, "Sharing of the Learnings."

While the Tahltan Central Council has archives in their office in Dease Lake, it is important to create a library where copies of language documents (both written and audio- and video-recording) can be stored and be accessible to the Tahltan community (Virtue and Gessner, 2012). In the words of Tahltan educator Carolyn Doody:

The resources should be easy to use and accessible to our people.
(Carolyn Doody).

Dictionaries and grammar guides. While there is a *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (Carter & Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994), there is a need for a more extensive dictionary to be created. Currently, Oscar Dennis is working on the dictionary to update it and add more entries.

Early scholarly linguistic writings that could be useful to language teachers and for the development of dictionaries and grammar texts are Eung-do Cook's *Stress and Related Rules in Tahltan* (1972); Margaret Hardwick's *Tahltan Consonant Harmony* (1984a), and her master's thesis, *Tahltan Morphology and Phonology* (1984b); Hank Nater's *Some Comments on the Phonology of Tahltan* (1989); and Patricia Shaw's *Consonant Harmony Systems: The Special Status of Coronal Harmony* (1991).

Scholarly linguistic articles specific to the Tahltan language could be used to develop Tahltan language materials, as well as in the development of a more extensive dictionary, as well as grammar texts. Alderete's *On Tone and Length in Tahltan* (2005) is an article that could be used to teach pronunciation and the proper transcription of Tahltan words. In Alderete and Bob's *A Corpus-based Approach to Tahltan Stress* (2005), the article could be used to teach the stress assignment rules of Tahltan (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Tanya Bob, a member of the Tahltan Nation, wrote her master's thesis on *Laryngeal Phenomena in Tahltan* (1999). While the thesis studied the phonetics and phonology of sounds that are articulated mainly in the larynx, Alderete and McIlwraith feel that, even though it is "couched within modern linguistics, the wealth of examples and the phonetic results are likely to be of interest to language educators outside of linguistics" (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008, p. 7).

Although *Guzāgi K'úgé' Our Language Book: Nouns. Kaska, Mountain Slavey and Sekani* (Kaska Tribal Council, 1997) includes nouns for several dialects of Kaska, Sekani and Mountain Slavey, the Good Hope Lake dialect of Kaska is very similar to Tahltan (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Therefore, these two volumes could be used to supplement the creation of a more extensive Tahltan dictionary.

Classroom materials. As has been mentioned previously, the language teachers have developed any curriculum that has been developed for the classroom. However, they do not always have the time and/or the training to develop curriculum. It is vital that language teachers be given the tools and time to do this. As well, curriculum developers need to be enlisted to support the development of much-needed curriculum and other language support materials. Tahltan educators and/or curriculum developers could look to School District 52's Sm'algyax Language Program's K-12 language curriculum materials for guidance.

*We have the Basic Tahltan Conversation,
we have a dictionary, the beginnings of a dictionary,
and we have a writing system,
which are all good.
But I think we're really lacking in more language resource materials
and we're also lacking in
organized opportunities for people to speak.
(Curtis Rattray).*

As was mentioned in the above section, the documentation of language can be used to develop language-teaching materials to increase the use of the Tahltan language and to assist language teachers.

A plant list that was compiled by Dr. Nancy Turner (1997) and Dr. Leslie Saxon during a field trip to Tahltan territory over a decade ago could contribute to a future language curriculum. In May 1997 while I was a math and science instructor at the North

Coast Tribal Council Education Centre (a private post-secondary institute for First Nations adults), I arranged a trip for my students to travel to Tahltan territory. My grandparents Charles and Julia Callbreath, Dr. Nancy Turner (ethnobotanist), Dr. Leslie Saxon (linguist), and Dr. Mary Lou Bevier (geologist) accompanied us. The reason for the trip was for my students to learn about the plants and geological structures of the area through the Tahltan culture and language. During this trip, Dr. Nancy Turner compiled a list of plants important to the Tahltan people. For each entry, the plant's relationship with the Tahltans was noted, as was where the plant was located. As well, the Tahltan, botanical, and common name was given. Dr. Leslie Saxon documented the Tahltan names using standard linguistic principles (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008). Saxon (1997) also documented other words, such as local fauna and place names, with the word list totalling more than 500 entries, and she made copies of the list for both the Iskut Nation and Tahltan Nation. The Tahltan plant names and their uses by the Tahltan were to be the beginning of the development of traditional plant knowledge curriculum for the schools. The late Robert Quock wanted this knowledge to be put in book form and shared with all Tahltan communities.

If I could explain to young people,
 then it's good for you.
 If all the plants full-grown,
 you guys come back,
 we could go up Klappan
 check out all the flowers.
 If you've got plant book written in English
 I could describe it to you
 and then write it down
 the names and everything.
 This will be great if we get together
 and after that we make a book out of it.
 We'll make a book out of it,
 this way my name be on it,

your name and who all involved names be on it
what we did for the community.

And it's not just for here.

It will be good for you guys in Telegraph Creek.

This way it might bring back our Native culture

and what we know,

Native language,

stuff like that, back.

See?

That's why I'm teaching a little bit in here [Klappan Independent Day School in Iskut].

(personal communication, May 1997).

These lists, along with the draft document, *Traditional medicines and remedies of the Iskut people: Plants from the areas around Iskut Village, British Columbia* (Iskut Elders, 2005), which references Saxon's list, and Andrew Stone's (1896 & 1897) list of Tahltan words to do with animals, berries, foods, colours, place names, and geography can all be used to develop curriculum. (Stone, a naturalist with the zoological department of the American Museum of Natural History and a representative of the New York Zoological Society, made two trips into Tahltan territory in 1896 and 1897 (Alderete & McIlwraith, 2008).

Curtis Rattray has been working on the development of a Tahltan atlas:

I'm putting together a Tahltan atlas

basically is what it is.

I've got 19 or 20 place names that I've recorded

but I've also included pictures of the places.

And the next step I want to do is actually place them on a map.

(Curtis Rattray).

The Tahltan Ancestral Study team, led by Vera Asp, has been working on an atlas consisting of 36 maps, which is based on the 1980s study whose focus was governance and sovereignty (personal communication, August 17, 2012). All of these maps would be valuable assets in the language classroom.

Recordings. It is crucial to record and document the Tahltan language. As Loretta Quock-Sort has pointed out,

We also need to have more our language documented while we still have fluent Tahltan speakers left.
(Loretta Quock-Sort).

Just this past year, we have lost a number of Tahltan Elders who were either fluent or semi-fluent in the language. As was mentioned before, there is also a need for an inventory of existing documentation, including audio and video-recordings. Such documentation can be used in the development of teaching materials, such as books, dictionaries, audiotapes, videotapes, DVDs, and CDs (Hinton, 2001c). This needs to be part of the Tahltan Language Authority's overall plan to revitalize the Tahltan language. In order to continue with the documentation of the Tahltan language, plans need to be put in place in regards to priorities, as well as who will carry out the documentation, what will be documented, and how it will be documented. "We must capture the purest oral forms of our languages to ensure that they will be available to future generations" (Kirkness, 2002, p. 17).

Technology. Making language a living part of daily life means embracing technology but not losing connections to community and the land. It can be difficult to balance hours in front of a computer with active involvement, such as learning about plants, how to weave, work on fish, etc. As well, so many Tahltans do not live on our territory but yearn to have a way to learn the Tahltan language.

When asked what can be done now that we are losing our Tahltan language, Tahltan educator Carolyn Doody responded,

*A computer software language program would be beneficial to our people,
then they can learn at home on their own,
with their children.*

*The language should be documented
in an easy to use dictionary format (there is one but it is old)
and a computer software program.
(Carolyn Doody).*

Another way to use technology is to develop videogames that would involve the Taltan language so as to engage young Tahltan learners. Oscar Dennis spoke of the need to engage our young people in our culture and language by using technology.

*And one of the things that I have a real problem as an anthropologist,
I have a problem getting it across to a lot of the educators
is you can't teach our culture,
our culture is not an abstract notion that you can bring it in
and teach it in a curriculum.*

*We live our culture and our culture is now full of fossil fuel engines,
electricity, videogames, electric guitars, snowmobiles, all the stuff,
that's our culture now.*

If you want to teach our culture, teach that.

Our past technologies is not our culture.

*It only does more harm when you try to force our kids
to participate in something that's the past old technology
that means nothing to them.*

*It makes them look upon that as something
that is being enforced upon them and they don't want to participate in it.*

I think one of the best tools we can start developing is videogames.

Mainstream videogames in our language.

(Oscar Dennis).

Besides Oscar Dennis's recommendation of utilizing videogames as a way to teach the Tahltan language, he also talks about how youth are making language and cultural connections with each other by communicating via social networking sites such as Bebo, and more recently, Facebook.

Even if you go on Bebo,

as a social scientist,

I'm always analyzing,

it's really valuable when it comes to this.

I was able to see how the mechanisms of this [Tahltan] society function

*and what puts us down and what brings us up.
 And in working on the blockade, we had a lot of our kids there.
 And these kids are now young adults going to school.
 And when you look at Bebo, I use Bebo too because of the music,
 I'm connected to a lot of these young people.
 And you notice, all these Iskut kids,
 all these Bebo sites got Rolling Stones videos,
 Rolling Stones symbols,
 there just so into this music that we play and they contact me.
 They leave comments.
 But one thing that I noticed,
 I got involved in this Bebo, I've had Bebo since 2005,
 but I really got into it in the last year,
 but I noticed like these,
 they're so proud of being from Iskut.
 They call it "Iskuteers."
 They have their own site and right on their Bebos
 there was a quiz last week
 and I participated in this quiz,
 but they're talking about the 'Skut Lake,
 how did they put it,
 something about the 'Skut Lake,
 it's about our traditional food.
 And you've got bum guts and fry meat,
 fry meat and rice, heart stew,
 and all this stuff that most people would think is totally,
 moose head,
 and like these are all our delicacies,
 and no one's embarrassed about it.
 (Oscar Dennis).*

It is crucial that we involve our youth in the revitalization of our language, and technology may be the way to do that. With the increased usage of smartphones (e.g. iPhone, Blackberry) and tablet computers (e.g. iPad, Galaxy Tab), application software, more commonly referred to as "apps," are being created to allow people to interact and learn Indigenous languages using such mobile devices. An example of such an app is FirstVoices Chat, which was developed by the First Peoples' Cultural Council (2012) and unveiled on June 18, 2012. The app provides keyboards for Indigenous languages in Canada, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States.

The Indigenous Language and Technology (ILAT) discussion list provides an open forum for “community language specialists, linguists, scholars, and students to discuss issues relating to the uses of technology in language revitalization efforts” (Cash & Penfield, n.d., para. 1). The ILAT discussion list has archives going back to October 2002, so the Tahltan Language Authority could research this website to find out what technology is being used to revitalize Indigenous languages around the world.

As well, the use of animation for both videos and comic books can make connections between our youth and our language and culture. The Healthy Aboriginal Network [n.d.] is a BC non-profit society that creates comic books and videos on health and social issues for youth. For one of their videos entitled, *Darkness calls in Gitxsan* (Sanderson, 2007a), it deals with teen depression and suicide, and it is completely in the Gitxsan language, with English subtitles. The accompanying comic book is portrayed in a superhero comic book style (Sanderson, 2007b). The BC Ministry of Health provided funding for this project.

Our Tahltan communities need to use technology as a way to enhance language learning, such as broadcasting, desktop publishing, videoconferencing, online learning, videogames, and modern media. The Internet, email, Facebook, and discussion groups can provide ways for community members who are scattered around the world to communicate. Because so many Tahltan members live outside of our traditional territory, different technologies have been suggested as ways for those individuals to be involved in language learning. So far there are no Tahltan language courses via videoconference, but the Northwest Community College Tahltan language conversation courses could be enhanced by online learning, using a mixed mode delivery. Because students are entering

school with more technological knowledge and skills than previous generations, we need to take advantage of the technology when teaching language courses. An example of online learning is Oscar Dennis's (n.d.) online Tahltan language lessons, which can be added to and built upon. Chad Day's (n.d.) youtube videos could also be expanded upon to enhance language learning.

The Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons (Carter, 1991) and the *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (Carter & Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994) need to be put online, so that they can be accessed by all of our people. While the Tahltan lessons have accompanying audio, the dictionary does not. At this point in time, the Tahltan language has not been archived online, with the exception of the work of Oscar Dennis and Chad Day. FirstVoices (2011), which is made up of web-based tools and services, could be used to support the archiving and teaching of the Tahltan language. While this is one way of archiving our language online, and has been used by many nations across Canada, another example is the Sm'alg̱yax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary (Ts'msyen Sm'alg̱yax Authority, 2011), which provides Sm'alg̱yax words, with their English equivalents. Many of the entries have sound files, which allow you to hear the word pronounced by a fluent Sm'alg̱yax speaker, along with the Sm'alg̱yax word used in a sentence.

Funding resources. A critical factor for the mobilization of resources for both language revitalization and healing is money. Curtis Rattray spoke about the difficulties in accessing government funding for language revitalization.

What happened was the Liberal Government had committed \$170 million into, through Heritage Canada, for language programming. And that was one of the campaign promises,

*but they didn't get elected.
 So when the Conservatives,
 their platform for languages was \$50 million,
 which is what has been basically allocated all these years.
 So there are some Aboriginal politics around that pot of money.
 So, for example,
 roughly about half of the languages in Canada are in BC,
 but BC only gets a tenth of that of these funds.
 So it's divided equally amongst the regions,
 not based on your languages,
 but based on these administrative regions called provinces.
 So that creates conflict within,
 at the national level for First Nations.
 I'm suspecting it creates a very disunited approach
 to language revitalization as a policy issue
 at the federal level.
 (Curtis Rattray).*

Since our conversation in 2010, the Canadian federal government has drastically cut funding for Aboriginal languages. Curtis Rattray is not alone in stating that Aboriginal peoples cannot rely on the government to heal us and to save our languages. Our territory is rich in valuable resources, and our Nation has received funds from resource developers, and expects to receive more funds from companies working in Tahltan territory. The Tahltan Central Council (2010d) has created the Tahltan Heritage Trust and Tahltan leadership is working on creating a Tahltan Community Foundation from which our people will be able to access this investment income.

*The other thing that it does too,
 it makes it more difficult for us to get the legislation and the funding
 that we need.
 I, as a political leader,
 I keep telling our people that we cannot wait around
 and expect the government to heal us and fix our problems.
 We need to be doing it ourselves.
 So the Tahltans, we're in a situation,
 and other communities are too,
 where they do have other sources of revenue
 that can be allocated towards this
 and our monies right now are still sitting in trust.*

*But if we do end up with a mine that gets developed in our territory
 that the Tahltan give consent to,
 then the arrangements that will end up will have
 some revenue sharing outcomes in.
 So the Novagold Participation Agreement
 is an example of how we can get other sources of funding.
 But, more specifically,
 how we can take that money and use it for our social development.
 And so that participation agreement does not allow for
 the individual dispersement of those funds.
 So you and I won't get a cheque from that,
 or other Tahltan members.
 What happens instead is that money goes into a trust fund
 and we as a collective then decide what that money's going to be used for.
 But as part of that participation agreement,
 those monies are to be used for social development,
 like education, cultural development, language,
 Elders, housing, health, educational issues, those types of things.
 The monies can be used for things like our governance,
 so it can go back into our central council
 for expanding our governance a lot more.
 And so the monies go into a collective
 and the collective decides what to do with it besides the individual.
 So those are some of the possibilities.
 Now, I know there's other First Nations communities
 that won't accept that.
 That's not acceptable in regards to using resource development
 on their territory as a way of generating revenue for their communities.*

*The questions becomes,
 "Okay, how much should we be giving to language,
 how much should we be giving to health?"
 The decision to what we're going to use that money for
 has already been made.
 And the membership who voted in favour of that said,
 "That's what we want. We like the conditions of this agreement.
 We like the conditions of where the money's going to."
 How do we disperse those monies?
 Whose going to be responsible for dispersing?
 The board, there's going to be a board –
 What's the makeup of that board?
 What's the structure of it?
 Do they represent communities?
 Are they elected in?
 Are they appointed?
 Those are the questions that need to be asked.*

It's the finer details that weren't worked out in the participation agreement.
(Curtis Rattray).

As Curtis has said, these funds, as part of the participation agreement with industry, are to be used for social, educational, and cultural development. Tahltan language revitalization would definitely fit the criteria.

In answering the research question, “In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize the Tahltan language?”, I have outlined suggestions that I would make to a newly formed Tahltan Language Authority. These suggestions have ranged from ensuring that healing plays a key role in language revitalization, the development of language programs that will benefit all ages, the certification of language teachers, and the need to train our community members to meet the teaching, documentation, and other key roles in language revitalization. As well, it is important for the Tahltan Language Authority to meet, interact, and/or learn from other community language specialists and scholars from around the world. From here, the Tahltan Language Authority, in consultation with the community, will need to make decisions regarding language priorities, which will focus on long- and short-term goals. From there, they will need to plan projects based on the priorities and goals and implement them.

ESDIDENE DAGA HOSJINH: “I Will Sing A Song For My People”

– Sharing of the Learnings



Figure 9. My Drum.

Esdidene daga hosjinh means “I will sing a song for my people.” Sharing the dream song that Rosie gave to me represents sharing what I have learned from the co-researchers in this study, both figuratively and in reality. Back in 1996, I able to take part in a drummaking workshop put on by the Prince Rupert Friendship House. David Rattray was the teacher, and so I learned how to make a drum from one of my own people on Ts’msyen territory. A few months later, my cousin Dale Campbell helped me to come up with, and draw, a design for my drum. In the summer of 2012, Nuxalk artist Latham

Mack painted the design on my drum. My task is to not only share the song that Rosie Dennis gave me, but to share what I have learned from co-researchers, Elders, Ancestors, and other scholars, on my research journey of Tahltan language revitalization.

My research had two major objectives: a) identifying what we need to do in order to keep our language alive and flourishing; and b) considering how Tahltan language revitalization can positively affect the lives of our people. When I began this research journey, I intended to learn more about the connection of our language to the land and the ways in which our people transmitted their knowledge and wisdom through oral traditions. Instead, I moved to a path that was directed by the voices of my people, the people with whom I had conversations about my research and the people from whom I had learned over the past two decades. I realized that I needed to focus on Tahltan language revitalization, so I followed that path. After I spoke with David Rattray, the path broadened to include the connection between language revitalization and healing. In this section, I discuss the learnings within the context of ways in which they can be applied in order to be useful and transformative for my people. I will then outline directions for future research.

Applications of the Learnings

In terms of the methodology that I articulated, namely Tahltan Voiceability, I have tried to ensure that I have given voice to my Elders, Ancestors, teachers, and co-researchers. In this section, I need to use my voice to articulate what is needed for success in Tahltan language revitalization.

When bringing together all that I had learned from my people and from other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars, I kept coming back to these questions: Are

these learnings helpful, useful, and transformative for my people? Am I presenting the learnings in a clear and concise way? Are they easy to understand? These questions have guided my analysis and presentation.

More specific to the study, I continually focused on answering the research questions. For the research question, “How can Tahltan language revitalization positively affect the lives of my people?”, I have focused on language revitalization as a form of empowerment, dealing specifically with Tahltan identity, the process of language revitalization, and the connection between language revitalization and healing. In regards to the research question, “In the past and present, what has been done to maintain, preserve, and revitalize our Tahltan language”, it is clear that while the Tahltan Nation has made some positive moves in the revitalization of our language, we still have a lot of work to do. In terms of the research question, “In the future, what do my people need to do to continue to maintain, preserve, and revitalize the Tahltan language?”, there are fundamental priorities that need to be established and focused on in order for Tahltan language revitalization to be successful. That work can be organized and carried out by a newly formed Tahltan Language Authority.

Overall, I have organized the application of the learnings under the following headings: Promotion of the language outside of Tahltan territory and Language revitalization as a form of empowerment. The latter category is broken down further into: Tahltan identity, the process of language revitalization, and language revitalization and healing.

Promotion of the language outside of Tahltan territory. I have written at length in the previous section about how we need to to promote our language amongst

ourselves. It is just as important to have non-Tahltans, and more generally, non-Aboriginal people, to understand how crucial it is to preserve and revitalize Aboriginal languages that were here before Canada as a nation was born.

As a guest who was born and raised on Ts'msyen territory, I feel that it is my duty to learn as much about the people upon whose land I make my home. I extend this to all Canadians. In the words of Dr. Lorna Williams, Lil'wat from the St'at'yem'c First Nation,

It's important to recognize and acknowledge that when people made or make their homes on the lands we now call Canada, that they take on the heritage of the languages located on those lands. It's extremely important that the public recognizes all Indigenous languages as their heritage; then governments must respond to ensure the knowledge and wisdom embedded in the languages are protected. These languages exist nowhere else in the world (as cited in Sharpe, 2010, p. 4).

Anthropologist and linguist Luisa Maffi (2012) speaks to the importance of cultural diversity and the need for people whose culture and language are not threatened to be more empathetic towards those whose languages are endangered. "What does it mean for them to lose their culture and language? And what does that mean for us globally?" (p. 2).

Kirkness (2002) and Burnaby (2003) feel that the support of the majority culture, and in particular, policy makers, is vital if we are to conquer institutionalized discrimination that is directed at our languages and cultures. By promoting Aboriginal

language revitalization, Kirkness (2002) also states that we need to push for legislation dealing with the preservation and revitalization of Aboriginal languages.

At this point in time, our federal government has not been sympathetic towards either the revitalization of Aboriginal languages or towards Aboriginal health and healing. This has been proven by the cuts in funding to Heritage Canada for language programs and to the cancellation of such initiatives and programs as the National Aboriginal Health Organization and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation under Health Canada. I have heard many of our people say that we cannot rely on the government to save our language; we need to do it ourselves.

There are times when I feel very pessimistic about the revitalization of our Tahltan language. However, when I speak to individuals like Oscar Dennis, who is working with Reginald Dennis and Ryan Dennis, two young Tahltan men from Iskut, on the Tahltan Language Revitalization Program for Iskut Valley Health Services, I start to feel optimistic again. Oscar's passion for our language is infectious. In late June 2012, I spoke on the phone with him for over half an hour and I could have listened to him talk about the work he is doing for much longer. At one point, he said, "Can you believe I'm getting paid to do this?" I told him that he had the best job in the world, and that I wanted to be involved in the revitalization of our language in any way that I could.

Language revitalization as a form of empowerment. In an email conversation, fellow doctoral student Trish Rosborough wrote about how she felt that language learning, even if we do not become fluent, is a decolonizing practice (personal communication, May 11, 2012). Barbara Burnaby (2003) writes that "there is always a complex of issues to be resolved in Aboriginal communities, the maintenance of the

Aboriginal language perhaps being only one of many strongly valued priorities. The consolation is that, if programs for Aboriginal language maintenance fail, other important goals may still be achieved through the effort” (p. 33). Anishinaabe scholar Brock Pitawanakwat (2009) states that “Indigenous language revitalization is a process of reclaiming, remembering and restoring a crucial aspect of peoplehood” (p. 258).

Squamish researcher Kristen Baker-Williams (2006) states, “

Language revitalization is about more than decolonization.... Its sole purpose is not to undo, or reverse the damage of colonization; rather, the purpose of language revitalization is to revive the core teachings and world view of who “we are” as Indigenous peoples. And in turn, the language renews itself and strengthens the heart of the people challenging and restructuring the world it is spoken in (p. 44).

I often find myself feeling overwhelmed when it comes to revitalizing our language. Can we do it? Are we running out of time? How are we going to do it? It makes me feel somewhat better knowing that even if we do not achieve full fluency in our language, that the effort will be worth it as the journey to Tahltan language revitalization will bring with it many rewards, among them, our people’s pride and identity.

Tahltan identity. While Pitawanakwat (2009) writes that language revitalization should not be looked at as a cure for colonization, he does state that, “language provides a sense of community and rootedness that can sustain and unite us as unique peoples” (p. 259). Bill Mussell (2008) defines decolonization as “a process where a colonized people reclaim their traditional culture, redefine themselves as a people and reassert their distinct

identity” (p. 4). By making the connection between language, culture, land, and our Ancestors, our people can gain a sense of pride about who we are and where we come from. We need to do this for all of our people, young and old alike.

Raising up our children. When attending Francis Gleason’s funeral service last July 2011, I had a chance to speak with language teacher Pauline Hawkins. She told me about Martin Brokenleg, a Lakota educator who has inspired her. She told me about the “Circle of Courage” model, developed by Larry Brendto, Martin Brokenleg, and Steven Van Bockern (2002), in which belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity form the circle of courage. This model can be used to educate children in a manner that helps them to become more aware of who they are. Our children need to feel proud of who they are as Tahltans, and this can include learning their Tahltan language. As Hallett et al.’s 2007 study found, First Nations communities in BC in which a majority of its members were able to speak their First Nations language conversationally also had low to zero rates of youth suicide. In the words of Hallett and his colleagues (2007), “...any threat to the persistence of personal and cultural identity poses a counterpart threat to individual or community wellbeing” (p. 392).

As a Tahltan researcher, educator, and most importantly, learner, I see my job as trying to find different ways to teach our children our Tahltan language. I know that by finding ways to teach our children, I am also finding ways to teach the language to myself, and by extension, to other adults. After I developed and taught a first year course at Northwest Community College entitled, “Aboriginal Languages: Revitalization and Preservation,” I began to see ways in which we could reach children with the use of puppets and dramatics when viewing youtube videos featuring the boy puppet Tsak and

Nisga'a Elder Mercy Moore. Tsak began working in the Nisga'a Elementary Secondary School classroom of Higu ayee (Peter McKay) in 1992. Since that time, several youtube videos have been featured starring Tsak, focusing on such topics as families, colours, counting animals, feelings, transportation, communication, and greetings.

I shared the youtube video featuring Tsak and Jiits Mercy talking about families (nisgaalanguage, 2006) with my students, and the students with young children shared the video with their families. Two students in particular used this video to portray how to use song to teach language to young children. They videotaped the eight- and three-year old children of one the students singing the "wagi'y (brother) song and used as part of their language revitalization class presentation. I found the five-minute video to be so engaging, and it was wonderful to see that the young children also found it entertaining and fun. For many months, that song was lodged in my head! Tsak inspired me to purchase puppets (such as a granny, little girl, and many animals that live in Tahltan territory) so that I could teach Tahltan to my young nieces and nephews. I will be making scripts and practice Tahltan phrases with my children this summer, along with the puppets, and videotaping the experience. Eventually, I'd like to share these teaching and learning videos with my people.

It is important that we involve our young people in Tahltan language revitalization. The active participation of youth in the revitalization of our language can provide them with many of the skills needed for life-career planning, such as research skills and working with others, to name a few. By taking part in Tahltan language revitalization, as well as learning their language, students will feel more pride about who

they are, which may increase their hopes and aspirations about future possibilities (Marshall, Shepard, & Batten, 2002).

Raising up our Elders. When I began learning about my Tahltan culture back in the early 1990s, it was like the shame of being “Indian” began to lift, and my grandparents and parents began sharing things with me in regards to their Tahltan and Gitx̱san cultures. I originally thought that I was learning about my people’s worldview, ways of knowing, and language so that I could, first of all, understand who I was as a Tahltan woman, but secondly, so that I could live up to my Tahltan name and pass on this valuable knowledge and wisdom to the younger generations. However, on a trip to Whitehorse, my grandparents and my mother made me realize that it was more than that. We were driving through Inland Tlingit territory and we decided to visit the museum in Teslin where work done by my cousin, Tahltan-Tlingit artist Dempsey Bob, was being exhibited. My mom teased her mother by saying, “Why are you so interested in all of this Indian stuff now? When we were growing up, you never taught us anything!” My granny turned towards her and said, “Ever since my granddaughter Judy has made me feel proud to be Tahltan!” I remember feeling a lump in my throat and tears welling up in my eyes. I realize that it is not only important to “raise up” our children, but we also need to “raise up” our Elders and show them how important they are and to honour them. It is also important that the transmission of knowledge and wisdom is not limited to flowing from older generation to younger generation; it needs to flow in both directions. I have shared much of what I have learned with my mother. As well, my grandfather was always trying to improve on his Tahltan, and my granny learned so much Tahltan from Peggy Campbell, a fluent speaker younger than herself.

The process of language revitalization. While the ultimate goal is to revitalize the Tahltan language, the process of revitalizing our language can be as valuable as the goal itself. Having the support of the community is paramount, and from what the co-researchers have told me, Tahltan language revitalization has to start at the community level. Fluent speakers will need to work with younger people to document the language, to assist with the translation of already recorded audio and video footage, to help with dictionaries, the development of curriculum, with teaching, to name just a few things. While the product is very important, like the development of an online dictionary, or the development of K-12 curriculum, the process will be invaluable, as it will bridge the gap between generations and build respect between the generations. This intergenerational transmission of knowledge can build relationships that weren't there before. I harken back to my master's research in which Gitga'at youth interviewed their Elders to learn about their people's relationship with plants. The words of one Elder always stand out to me as she spoke about how she now received respect from the two boys who interviewed her, and she, in turn, learned to respect them. From my master's thesis:

One plant informant/Elder talked extensively about her interview experience with two students. She said that at first she was annoyed when the students showed up at her home, since she was busy baking bread. She said that they were "gentlemen" and "seemed interested." "I kind of hesitated. They told me it was a school project. They asked all kinds of questions. They were shy at the beginning." This Elder said that they act differently towards her now, not so "standoffish." She said that they usually never talked to her when they saw her around the community, but that "now it's different" (Thompson, 2004, p. 82).

Language revitalization and healing. As I have stated before, we can look at the revitalization of our Tahltan language as a positive incentive to heal our people, but it is important to carry out both language revitalization and the healing of our people concurrently. What we need to determine is: What healing journeys would best suit language revitalization? And what specifically would work best for my people? How can we involve community in both healing and in language revitalization? Can we do both at once? We don't have much time in terms of preserving and revitalizing our languages. We need to continue what we have done, but at a faster pace with a sense of urgency. We only have so many fluent speakers left and we have lost many Elders in the last year alone. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has stated that healing can take many many years and because we have so few fluent speakers left, we need to work on both healing the pain in our communities and revitalizing our language concurrently.

...this healing process is long and tedious. Fragmented souls do not heal in a year. There is no efficient band-aid-like remedy to correct extensive damages that have been perpetuated for so many years and, in the instance of Aboriginal people, generation after generation. (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p. 79).

We are losing our fluent speakers at an alarming rate and so we need to work quickly in order to revitalize our language. In the end, we are undertaking this challenge, not only so we can save the language, but so we can also save our culture and save ourselves as a people. Simultaneously revitalizing our language and healing ourselves can do this. While healing our people from over a century of colonization and assimilation and its impact on our language, our culture, our self-esteem and identity is

not something we can just “decide” to do, the revitalization of our language will be healing, if we tie it to other actions, such as health, education, and social development. Because so much pain and shame has been associated with language, the language must be part of the healing. Wahpetunwan Dakota scholar Waziyatawin (Angela Cavender Wilson) (2004) states,

Ultimately, the strength of our Indigenous cultures rests in our ability to exert our humanity through the decolonization of our minds and the transformation of the world around us while recognizing that our truths stem from the eternal nature of our languages, ceremonies, worldviews, and values (p. 84).

Future Directions for Research

While this dissertation aims to specifically revitalize the Tahltan language, much more needs to be done to maintain, preserve, and revitalize Indigenous languages in British Columbia, Canada, and the rest of the world. As well, several other research directions could assist in the survival of Indigenous languages, contribute to the healing of our peoples while simultaneously revitalizing our languages, and to Indigenous research frameworks and methodologies.

Language revitalization. Verna Kirkness (2002) writes about the need for Aboriginal peoples to engage in meaningful research when it comes to language revitalization:

The purpose of research is to find answers to questions, and researching important questions may well be the most critical area to be addressed if we are to save our languages. The most urgent questions needing research pertain to the creation of successful and effective models of language renewal (p. 20).

I have made several suggestions to a newly formed Tahltan Language Authority, with many dealing with language programming for various ages. However, much more research needs to be done in regards to the efficacy of teaching and learning methods used to teach Indigenous languages.

The role of healing in language revitalization. There is a need to carry out more research about whether language revitalization is harder to implement than cultural revitalization to confirm and support what David Rattray is saying about pain being an impediment to language revitalization. Regarding Hallett et al.'s (2007) groundbreaking research linking language use with a decrease in Aboriginal youth suicides, further research is needed to look at the use of language and other health outcomes, as well as the connection between Indigenous languages and healing (McIvor, 2010b, Robbins and Dewar, 2011). There is also a need for more published research dealing with Aboriginal conceptions of health and wellness, and how that affects language learning.

Indigenous research frameworks and methodologies. As I have stated in my methodology section, I thank the Indigenous researchers who have gone before me, who have blazed a trail in which other Indigenous scholars, such as myself, can follow. I hope that my work will also add to the growing field of Indigenous research methodologies and paradigms.

I encourage Indigenous researchers to use an Indigenous research framework. Draw inspiration from your Elders, Ancestors, and your people for metaphors and images to guide your research. Look to the language and the land; the cycles of the season (McIvor, 2012) or lunar phases (Swanson, 2008); from stories, art, and dance; from Ancestral knowledge and wisdom, your people's ways of knowing, and your people's

worldview. Look to the button blanket (Rosborough, 2012) or to the patterns in *atahakohp* (star blanket) (McIvor 2012).

When teaching a second year First Nations Studies course in Aboriginal Community Research at Northwest Community College in May/June 2012, my students and I discussed the cyclical nature of Indigenous research, such as building and nurturing relationships, the interconnectedness of all living things, listening to the people who are teaching you, how the voices who are teaching you may change the direction or focus of your research, the importance of going back to the voices over and over again to guide you, the responsibility of honouring the knowledge and wisdom that is shared with you, to share what you have learned, the importance of asking yourself at different stages of the research whether you are still on the path of carrying out useful and transformative research, as just a few examples. Researcher and educator Dalene Swanson (2008) expresses it as, “the Indigenous cyclicity of the pedagogy” when discussing the way she organized her research around the phases of the moon. One of my students of Haida descent used the life cycle of the salmon to organize her research proposal, which focused on the relationship and responsibility that First Nations fishers have to the Skeena River and the salmon. Another student, who was not Indigenous, used the life cycle of the butterfly to represent the stages of learning that she and her two co-researchers were going to go through, the process that these two adult Indigenous students have gone through in returning to high school and being successful (mother and daughter), and to signify her crest (for many First Nations in British Columbia, non-Indigenous people are given the crest of either butterfly or hummingbird, with the exception of those individuals who either marry into the nation or who are adopted). For my dissertation, I spoke about

my button blanket and how it not only situates who I am as a Tahltan person, but that a button blanket is never complete; there are always more buttons to sew on, which I have equated to my work on Tahltan language revitalization.

I have found that I am part of many different worlds; both Tahltan and mainstream EuroCanadian, and Tahltan and the academic world. As a woman of both Aboriginal and European ancestry, I need to find a balance between these two worlds. Like Métis scholar Fyre Jean Graveline (1998), I am located in the intersection of Aboriginal and Western cultures. Rains, Archibald and Deyhle (2000) have written about the challenges of Indigenous researchers traveling on an academic journey; of how we need to be true to who we are as Indigenous people, in that we need to not only honour the teachings of our Ancestors, but also balance that with being “good researchers” (p. 340). Kathy Absolon (in Kovach, 2006) articulates this struggle of being in two different worlds:

What I feel frustrated or constrained by doing research in the academy is that you are forced to begin from a colonized place, and we are forced to begin from that place for two reasons. One is that we are colonized – Indigenous people are colonized. The second reason is that the academy reinforces that and we are in that place. Yet within me, there is an Anishnabe thinker, person, and my European side. My European colonized self is in here too, and I am trying to morph into something that is genuine or authentically me. It’s not just Anishnabe, it’s not just European. It’s about what *I* am; it’s also what a lot of other Aboriginal people are too. We haven’t had an education system that has helped

us to reconcile those different parts within ourselves, so I begin with that kind of frustration (p. 128).

In his keynote address at the Canadian Aboriginal Science and Technology Society conference, Aboriginal architect Douglas Cardinal (1996) stated that our Elders want us to face our future with a computer in one hand and a drum in the other. “There is, appropriately, a growing call for ‘decolonizing methodologies’ in Aboriginal research and program initiatives that engage in meaningful dialogue with communities, establish priorities and conduct research that is successfully collaborative” (Adelson, 2005, p. S58). This is my challenge as a Tahltan researcher – to be able to bring these two worlds together in a way that does not compromise who I am as a Tahltan, while also being able to push the boundaries of the academy in a respectful way.

“Indigenous research is in the language. All you have to do is learn the language.” A colleague spoke these inspirational words to Anishinaabe researcher Kathy Absolon. Absolon goes on to explain, “If we learn our language, the methodology is in learning your language because then you’ll understand what the Elders are talking about. The knowledge is in the language” (as cited in Kovach, p. 129). These words tie methodology to language revitalization in a profound way in that the values and worldview of a people are tied up in a language. By learning my Tahltan language, I am also learning the values, ethics, and worldview of my people, which can guide any research that I undertake. By the very nature of my people’s worldview, the research will be useful, transformative, and relational; it will be interconnected with our land, our language, and each other. I conclude this section with the last part of a poem that I wrote about articulating a Tahltan worldview using a Tahltan phrase.

*Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi – “Our Ancestors Are In Us”
could be used to articulate a Tahltan worldview
which would encompass Tahltan ontology and epistemology
as well as Tahltan axiology, methodology, and pedagogy.
All parts of an Indigenous research framework that
honour our connections, our relationships...
All My Relations,
Self-In-Relation,
Relationality,
Tsawalk,
Hedekeyeh Hots'ih Kāhidi.*

Coming Back Full Circle to *KAKHA'U TS'EDE EDEDAGE ASLA*



Figure 10: My Button Blanket.

As I mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, I compare the carrying out of my research and the writing up of this research to the artistic process of Chilkat weaving. While writing this dissertation, I also began to compare this academic writing process to that of making button blankets. I have been told that you never really finish a button blanket; that there are always more things to do or add. Regarding my button blanket, I still have more beautiful buttons to sew on, buttons that were given to me by one of my first students, Anne Muldoe, a Gitx̱san hereditary chief who has since passed on to be with her Ancestors. I also need to make a clasp to secure the blanket at the top – so many things to do! Family members and I have used this blanket for graduation ceremonies, with hopefully many more to come. I definitely see my button blanket as a work in progress, which is the way I also see my work on Tahltan language revitalization. This dissertation is just the beginning of a long process, a labour of love, to which I want to dedicate the rest of my life.

Using another artistic metaphor, in regards to completing this dissertation, I think of Ts'msyen weaver William White and what he says about completing a Chilkat

weaving: “It’s all in the finishing.” I hope that I have come close to “finishing” off this dissertation in as artistic and seamless a manner as the eminent Chilkat weavers whose art I have admired over the years.

I have found the writing of this dissertation to be a very creative process, but a process that was often very hard to carry out – dissertation writing can be very lonely! While I feel a real urgency to revitalize the Tahltan language, due to both family and teaching commitments, this did not always translate into finding as much time as was needed to complete my dissertation more quickly.

Ways in which I motivated myself to complete this academic process was to listen to the voices of my co-researchers and to write poetry. I also found art, in the form of regalia, to be very inspirational when it came to completing my dissertation:

Art as Inspiration (by *Edōsdi*)

*As a way to inspire myself to get my dissertation written,
every now and then I would daydream -
often with my friend and colleague Dr. Nancy Mackin! -
about what I would wear to my convocation ceremony.
Would I wear my “Audrey” Raven dress,
designed by Haida artist Dorothy Grant,
With Tsesk’iye Chō dancing across the bottom in teal blue?*



Figure 11. My Dorothy Grant Raven dress.

*I would need something that was truly Tahltan,
made by a Tahltan artist...
I could borrow my grandpa’s gwēl,*

*designed and sewn by Linda Bob.
This beaded bag was given to him
by the children and grandchildren of his first cousin,
Johnny Bob,
to honour him on his 100th birthday
on March 14, 2009.
A floral design of swirling
reds and purples...*



Figure 12. Grandpa's gwēl, by Linda Bob.

*Perhaps a Chilkat bag and headdress
made by my dear friend,
Ts'msyen weaver, William White?
An original art of the Ts'msyen people,
Chilkat weaving would represent
the territory where I was born and raised
and where I continue to make my home.
As well, my people have worn Chilkat,
with a long history of trading with the Tlingit
for this beautiful art.*



Figure 13. My Chilkat headdress, by William White.

William White suggested to me

*that the beading design
on my grandfather's mittens
be replicated on something that I graduate in...
What a wonderful idea!
The creation of art on moose or caribou skin,
skin that my granny has saved for over 50 years,
and using my granny's mother's cherished beads.*



Figure 14. Grandpa's mitten.

*How lucky am I that I already have
beautiful moccasins made by Verna Callbreath,
wife of my grandfather's nephew Melvin.
I also have moccasins that I made myself
while working with the Ts'msyen community of Hartley Bay
on the intergenerational transmission of Gitga'at plant knowledge.*



Figure 15. My moccasins, by Edōsdi.

*I would also need something
to represent my father
and his Gitksan heritage.
Perhaps a beautiful tehkahche gwēl sewn by
his cousin Valerie Morgan?
With a gold sockeye pin tucked away*

to honour his love of fishing and the ocean.



Figure 16. *Tehkahche gwēl*, by Valerie Morgan.

*The motivation kicks in when I realize
that in order to wear
all of this beautiful, meaningful art,
all I need to do is finish this dissertation!!!
Each word gets me that much closer –
Click click. Click click. Click click.
Each click on the keyboard gets me that much closer -
Not to just finishing this academic exercise,
But to working with my people to revitalize our language.*

My journey of learning who I am as a Tahltan began with the making of my button blanket, and over two decades later, I am still working on that button blanket. I see my journey of learning who I am as a Tahltan as a way to honour my Elders and Ancestors, which includes trying to revitalize our language.

My grandfather was very proud of the fact that he remembered the Tahltan word for “doctor” – *dinlen* – and that he was able to stump several fluent speakers. Before he passed away, he would often ask me, “When you going to be *Dinlen Edōsdi*?” While I could have become “Dr. Judith Thompson” on my own, I could never ever dream of becoming *Dinlen Edōsdi* without my people, my Elders, my Ancestors – ***Hedekeyeh Hots’ih Kāhidi.***

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Appendix A: Tahltan Declaration

1910 Declaration of the Tahltan Tribe:

We, the undersigned members of the Tahltan tribe, speaking for ourselves, and our entire tribe, hereby make known to all whom it may concern, that we have heard of the Indian Rights movement among the Indian tribes of the Coast, and of the southern interior of B.C. Also we have read the Declaration made by the chiefs of the southern interior tribes at Spences Bridge of the 16th July last, and we hereby declare our complete agreement with the demands of the same, and with the position taken by the said chiefs, and their people on all the questions stated in the said Declaration, and we furthermore make known that it is our desire and intention to join with them in the fight for our mutual rights, and that we will assist in the furtherance of this object in every way we can, until such time as all these matters of moment to us are finally unsettled. We further declare as follows:

Firstly - We claim the sovereign right to all the country of our tribe - this country of ours which we have held intact from the encroachments of other tribes, from time immemorial, at the cost of our own blood. We have done this because our lives depended on our country. To lose it meant we would lose our means of living, and therefore our lives. We are still as heretofore, dependant for our living on our country, and we do not intend to give away the title to any part of same without adequate compensation. We deny the B.C. government has any title or right of ownership in our country. We have never treated with them nor given them any such title. (We have only lately learned the B.C. government make this claim, and that it has for long considered as its property all the territories of the Indian tribes of B.C.)

Secondly - We desire that a part of our country, consisting of one or more large areas (to be selected by us), be retained by us for our own use, said lands, and all thereon to be acknowledged by the government as our absolute property. The rest of our tribal land we are willing to relinquish to the B.C. government for adequate compensation.

Thirdly - We wish it known that a small portion of our lands at the mouth of the Tahltan River, was set apart a few years ago by Mr. Vowell as an Indian reservation. These few acres are the only reservation made for our tribe. We may state we never applied for the reservation of this piece of land, and we had no knowledge why the government set it apart for us, nor do we know exactly yet.

Fourthly - We desire that all questions regarding our lands, hunting, fishing etc., and every matter concerning our welfare, be settled by treaty between us and the Dominion and B.C. government.

Fifthly - We are of the opinion it will be better for ourselves, also better for the governments and all concerned, if these treaties are made with us at a very early date, so all friction, and misunderstanding between us and the whites may be avoided, for we hear lately much talk of white settlement in this region, and the building of railways, etc., in the near future.

Signed at Telegraph Creek, B.C., this eighteenth day of October, Nineteen hundred and ten, by NANOK, Chief of the Tahltans, NASTULTA, alias Little Jackson, GEORGE ASSADZA, KENETI, alias Big Jackson, And eighty other members of the tribe.

Appendix B: Tahltan Language Practical Orthography

Table 6: Tahltan Language Practical Orthography

Letter	English equivalent/description	Example	Meaning
'	no written equivalent – made with a stoppage in the throat (glottalization)	<i>ete'e</i>	father
a	u in cup	<i>gah</i>	rabbit
ā	longer in duration ³ something like au in caught	<i>dānā</i>	money
b	b in big	<i>bēs</i>	knife
ch	ch in church	<i>chō</i>	big, large
ch'	same as ch, but made with a stoppage in the throat	<i>ch'oh</i>	quill
d	d in did	<i>dene</i>	person
dl	no English equivalent	<i>dlūne</i>	mouse
dz	ds in pads	<i>dzime</i>	bird
dz *	No English equivalent	<i>dzet</i>	mountain
e	e in ten	<i>menh</i>	lake
ē	same as e, but longer in duration	<i>bēs</i>	knife
g	g in good	<i>gah</i>	rabbit
gh	similar to g, but a softer sound	<i>ghu'</i>	tooth
g	g said farther back in the mouth	<i>togatāl</i> (also said with a regular g)	pants
h	h in head	<i>hiyenelīn</i>	they want it
i	e in enough, or ee in keep	<i>ni'</i>	face
ī	same as i, but longer in duration	<i>nī'</i>	moss
j	j or dg in judge	<i>jije</i>	berry
k	k in keep	<i>kedā</i>	moose
k	k said far back in the mouth	<i>kazune</i>	otter
k'	k with a stoppage in the throat	<i>k'ū or k'ū'</i>	fish eggs
k'	k' said far back in the mouth	<i>k'otl</i> (also said with a regular k)	bucket
kh	similar to k, but a softer sound	<i>khēt</i>	trap
l	l in large	<i>la'</i>	hand
ł	no English equivalent	<i>luwe</i>	fish
m	m in mother	<i>mēduh</i>	thank you
n	n in nothing	<i>na'</i>	Here, take it!
nh	no English equivalent	<i>menh</i>	lake
o	oa in oats	<i>khoh</i>	grizzly bear

³ In “The Tahltan Alphabet” in *Tahltan Children’s Illustrated Dictionary*, I have removed “same as a but longer in duration” as a and ā do not have the same sound.

ō	same as o, but longer in duration	<i>chō</i>	big, large
p	p in pup (a very rare sound)	<i>espāne</i>	my friend
s	s in see	<i>sas</i>	black bear
<u>s</u> *	th in thin or s in sin -see notes on speech variation below	<i>s̄indah</i>	Sit down!
sh	sh in shoot	<i>ishkādi</i>	crazy
t	t in two	<i>tū</i>	water
t'	t with stoppage in throat	<i>t'ū</i>	tender
tl	no English equivalent	<i>tleyh</i>	grease, lard
tl'	tl with stoppage in throat	<i>tl'oyh</i>	grass
ts	ts in cats	<i>tsa'</i>	beaver
ts'	ts with stoppage in throat	<i>ts'ots</i>	blowfly
<u>ts</u> *	no English equivalent	<i>tsē</i>	rock
<u>ts'</u> *	<u>ts</u> with stoppage in throat	<i>ts'ē</i>	thread
u	oo in boot	<i>ghu'</i>	tooth
ū	same as u but longer	<i>tū</i>	water
w	w in was	<i>wahdānā</i>	glasses
y	y in yes	<i>yige</i>	under
yh	no English equivalent	<i>tleyh</i>	grease, lard
z	z in zoo	<i>zidle</i>	only
<u>z</u> *	th in then (this is different from th in thin)	<i>zas</i>	snow

4

*Amongst some speakers of Tahltan, there are different ways of pronouncing some of the Tahltan consonants. This difference occurs in the letters s, ts, ts', z, and dz. Words containing an underlined s (s) may be pronounced two different ways. Some people pronounce them with the *th* sound as in the English word *thin*. Others pronounce it much more closely to an *s* sound. Similarly, words containing an underlined z (z) are pronounced by some with the *th* sound in *then* or *other*, and by others by a sound much closer to an English *z*. In this way, a word like zas (snow), may have two perceptively different pronunciations.

This happens because the Tahltan s series of sounds are actually made somewhere between the *s* and *th* sounds of English. A person accustomed to hearing English, sometimes perceives a sound closer to an *s* and other times closer to a *th*. To a person who grew up speaking Tahltan, the meaning of the words with this unusual sound is perfectly clear. To someone whose first language is English, however, the distinction is not easily perceptible.

For this reason, words containing either s or z may be pronounced somewhat differently depending on the individual speaker's background. Neither way is the "right way" (Carter and Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994, p. vii).

⁴ From *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary* (pp. v-viii), by C. Carter and Tahltan Tribal Council, 1994, Dease Lake, BC: Tahltan Tribal Council. Adapted with permission.

Appendix C: Invitation to Participate

Sample letter to community members

Judy Thompson (Edōsdi)
 1243 2nd Avenue West
 Prince Rupert, BC V8J 1J3
 Phone: 250-627-8772
 Fax: 250-624-4920
 e-mail: jt@citytel.net

To members of the Tahltan Nation:

My name is Judy Thompson and I am a member of the Tahltan Nation. My Tahltan name is Edōsdi, my grandparents are Charles and Julia Callbreath and my mother is Cathryn Thompson. I am a math, science, and First Nations Studies instructor at Northwest Community College in Prince Rupert, BC. I have been involved in teaching Tahltan science camps in the years 2000, 2007 and 2008.

I am a graduate student at the University of Victoria working on a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, which requires me to conduct research. As a Tahltan educator, I hope to conduct research that is relevant and useful to our people. The purpose of this research project, entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan*, is to look at the connection between the Tahltan language and the land and the ways in which the Tahltan people pass on their knowledge and wisdom about the land through oral traditions, such as story-telling. I would like to develop science curriculum for our classrooms that connect our children with our Elders, to teach our children about the importance of our stories and language and how it connects us to our land, and to ensure that our children understand how our people are connected to the land.

I am hoping to observe Elders and Tahltan learners (children/youth/adults) interacting at cultural and/or educational events, in order to learn about how knowledge and wisdom is transferred between generations. I would like to observe Tahltan learners learning from our Elders about our relationship with the plants, animals and the land, and the respect our people have for the land. I would like to record such observations by taking notes, taking pictures, and audio and video recording interactions between the learners and the Elders. Being a participant in this research project is voluntary. If you are an adult learner or Elder and are willing to take part in the project, I will provide consent forms for you to sign. If you are a child or youth learner and you are willing to take part in the project, I will provide consent forms for both you and your parents to sign.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at 250-627-8772 or jt@citytel.net. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Nancy Turner at 250-721-6124 or nturner@uvic.ca, and Dr. Anne Marshall at 250-721-7815 or amarshal@uvic.ca.

Meduh.

Judy Thompson (Edōsdi)

Appendix D: Letters of Intent

Judy Thompson (Edōsdi)
1243 2nd Avenue West
Prince Rupert, BC V8J 1J3
Phone: 250-627-8772
Fax: 250-624-4920
e-mail: jt@citytel.net

To: Tahltan First Nation, Iskut First Nation, Tahltan Central Council, Indigenous Tahltan Elders, Klabona Keepers Elders Society

My name is Judy Thompson and I am a member of the Tahltan Nation. My Tahltan name is Edōsdi and my grandparents are Charles and Julia Callbreath. I am a math, science, and First Nations Studies instructor at Northwest Community College in Prince Rupert, BC. I am also a graduate student at the University of Victoria working on a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies, which requires me to conduct research.

As a Tahltan educator, I hope to conduct research that is relevant and useful to our people. The purpose of this research project, entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan*, is to look at the connection between the Tahltan language and the land and the ways in which the Tahltan people pass on their knowledge and wisdom about the land through oral traditions, such as story-telling. I would like to develop science curriculum for our classrooms that connect our children with our Elders, to teach our children about the importance of our stories and our language and how it connects us to our land, and to ensure that our children understand how our people are connected to our land.

I am hoping to interview five to six fluent speakers of the Tahltan language, as well as several Tahltan cultural experts. I am also hoping to observe children and Elders interacting at cultural and/or educational events. I would like to have the opportunity to meet with representatives from your organization to discuss my research and to get approval for the research. If approval is given, I would like to get feedback and guidance about my research, get assistance regarding potential language and/or cultural experts to interview, and to find out about the possibility of my attending cultural and/or educational events over the next few months. I will be in our territory from June 17-21st. I am also hoping to attend the Tahltan Central Council's Annual General Meeting at the end of June. As well, I will be involved with the Tahltan Science Camp from July 14-18th. Please let me know if it is possible to meet during any of those dates. I will follow this letter with a phone call to book a meeting at your convenience.

If you have any questions, you can contact me at 250-627-8772 or jt@citytel.net. You may also contact my supervisors Dr. Nancy Turner at 250-721-6124 or nturner@uvic.ca, and Dr. Anne Marshall at 250-721-7815 or amarshal@uvic.ca.

Meduh.

Judy Thompson (Edōsdi)

Appendix E: Letters of Approval

From: Richard Mclean <chief.mclean@tahltan.ca>
Subject: Ltr of support
Date: 14 September, 2009 3:59:57 PM PDT
To: Judy Thompson <jt@citytel.net>

Hi Judy

Your work and efforts to keep our language from dying out is very important. You have our full support in continuing this fight to keep our language from extinction. Keep up the good work. Meduh.

Chief Rick Mclean

From: Marie Quock <marie.quock@iskutfn.ca>
Subject: RE: support of research
Date: 15 September, 2009 11:52:52 AM PDT
To: Judy Thompson <jt@citytel.net>

Hi Judy,

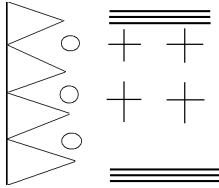
This e-mail is in regard to your request for a letter of support from the Iskut Band Council.

The Iskut Band Council fully supports your research project, The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through language and oral traditions of the Tahltan.

We think this research will prove to be very valuable to the Tahltan Nation also.

Sincerely,

Marie Quock
Chief
Iskut Band Council



Tahltan Central Council

Box 69
 Tat'ah (Dease Lake, BC)
 V0C 1L0
 Phone 250-771-3274
 Fax 250-771-3020

16 June 2008

Judy Thompson (Edosdi)
 1243 2nd Avenue West
 Prince Rupert, BC V8J 1J3
 Phone: 250-627-8772
 Fax: 250-624-4920
 e-mail: jt@citytel.net

Dear Judy:

The Tahltan Central Council (TCC) supports your proposed research project, entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan*. Presently, the Tahltan Nation's involvement in resource management processes is based on our Tahltan Knowledge (TK). The TCC brings our TK to provincial processes like the environmental assessment processes, land and resource use permitting processes, BC Parks management, etc. The TCC participates because we believe we can make changes and that Tahltan people have something important to offer humanity.

As a researcher you would be required to follow the ethical research guidelines as per the TCC Heritage policies all researchers are required to follow the ethical guidelines, this includes Tahltan researchers. Please contact the TCC Heritage Department for more details. The TCC will be required to sign a Tahltan Knowledge protocol with all researchers as this is shared and communally held knowledge; for example Tahltan creation stories.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact me at the above phone number.

Meduh,
 TAHLTAN CENTRAL COUNCIL

Curtis Rattray
 Chair

c.c. Camille Callison, TCC Heritage Manager

INDIGENOUS
Tahltan Elders
Box 82
Telegraph Creek, BC
V0J 2W0
tahltanelders@live.ca
250-235-3035

Judy Thompson (Edosdi)
1243 2nd Avenue West
Prince Rupert, BC
V8J 1J3

Dear Judy,

The ITE want to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule here in Telegraph Creek to meet with us and explaining your studies and research to us. We are impressed and pleased that a young person such as yourself is not only so interested in concerned with the intricacies of the Tahltan language and oral traditions but also willing to invest yourself in passing them along to the children. This is so very important and needed so badly, that we feel indebted to you. If we can help you at any time, please feel free to call on us. We will be glad to support and assist you in any way we can.

Again, thank you for sharing with us.

Meduh.

So say the Indigenous Tahltan Elders of Telegraph Creek on this day: 3 July, 2008

Appendix F: Consent Forms

The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan

Fluent Speakers of the Tahltan Language Interview

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan* that is being conducted by Judy Thompson. My Tahltan name is Edōsdi and I am a member of the Tahltan Nation. I am a graduate student in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions at 250-627-8772 or jt@citytel.net. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Turner and Dr. Anne Marshall. You may contact Nancy Turner at 250-721-6124 or nturner@uvic.ca, and Anne Marshall at 250-721-7815 or amarshal@uvic.ca. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Northern Scientific Training Program.

The purpose of this research project is to look at the connection between the Tahltan language and the land and the ways in which the Tahltan people pass on their knowledge and wisdom about the land through oral traditions, such as story-telling. Research of this type is important because the results will lead to the development of curriculum that brings our people's knowledge and wisdom into classrooms. It will also contribute to existing educational theories on learning and cultural sensitive ways of learning. In addition, it will make contributions to Indigenous methodologies and ways of doing culturally relevant and useful research.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a fluent speaker of the Tahltan language. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include one to four in-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour each. These interviews can take place in your home or out on the land, or wherever you are most comfortable and whenever it is most convenient to you. These interviews may be conducted individually or in groups. If you agree, I will record the interview with a videocamera or audio taperecorder and may also take pictures. Initialling here indicates that you understand that if videos, audiotapes, or photos are published or shown as part of the study results, you may be identifiable even if you are not named.

Videos may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____
Audiotapes may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____
Photos may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including becoming tired or fatigued during the interview process. If you are feeling fatigued at anytime, please let me know and I will stop the interview immediately so that you can have a break, so that we can reschedule the interview, and/or stop the interview altogether. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the knowledge and development of culturally relevant educational practices that connect Tahltan learners with their Elders through language, oral traditions, and the land.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given an agreed upon gift for each interview that you take part in to honour the sharing of your knowledge and wisdom. Examples of such gifts are food (e.g. jars of jam, berries, soapberries, fruit, smoked salmon, halibut, baked goods, coffees, teas), a scarf, blanket, something that displays your crest, or books. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research co-researchers. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. If

you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in the study analysis ONLY if you agree. In the event that you withdraw from the study part way through you will be asked if you want the data that you have contributed to be part of the analysis. If you agree your data will remain in the study, if not your taped interview(s) will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed. Should you withdraw from the study at any time the agreed upon gift decided upon is yours to keep. You will also receive a copy of any posters, DVD's, or booklets that result from the analysis of the research. To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, at the beginning of every interview, I will check to see if you are still willing to participate in the research and remind you that you are able to withdraw at anytime.

Your anonymity can only be partially protected as there are not many fluent Tahltan speakers left, making it possible to be identified. As well, if you are interviewed with other co-researchers, this will also lead to partial loss of anonymity. While there may be a partial loss of anonymity in data collection, your anonymity will be protected in the reporting of the data, if you request it. If you request anonymity, your name will not be recorded on the transcribed data, a fictitious name or coded initials will be used in place of your name and the researcher will be the only person who knows your identity.

Your confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in a group interview. You and the other co-researchers being interviewed together will be asked to respect the confidentiality of each other. In the written report, your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as no names or identifying information will be used in the analysis of the research, unless you want to be recognized for your contribution to the research.

Your confidentiality will be protected by storing audio/video-recordings, field notes, transcribed data, and photos in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the data. You will receive duplicates of any audio/video-recordings, copies of the transcribed data, and photos involving yourself. You can also consent to this data being made accessible to Tahltan community groups of your choosing. Copies of the research products (e.g. posters, DVD's, booklets) will be given to both Tahltan Band Councils and the Tahltan Central Council so that community members can have access to the materials. All data will be archived by the researcher for future generations. If your data is used in the future for educational purposes other than this research project, the researcher will seek your permission.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly with you, at community meetings in Tahltan communities, in a doctoral dissertation, in published articles, in presentations at scholarly meetings, and in community-based curricula.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisors at the above numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

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

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

I would like to be recognized for my contribution to the research by having my name appear in the analyzed data. Yes ___ No ___

I would like to have any data involving myself be made accessible to Tahltan community or political groups. Yes ___ No ___ (If yes, please list who you want to share the data with.)

A copy of this consent will be left with you and a copy will be taken by Judy Thompson.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan

Tahltan Language and/or Cultural Educators Interview

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan* that is being conducted by Judy Thompson. My Tahltan name is Edōsdi and I am a member of the Tahltan Nation. I am a graduate student in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions at 250-627-8772 or jt@citytel.net. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Turner and Dr. Anne Marshall. You may contact Nancy Turner at 250-721-6124 or nturner@uvic.ca, and Anne Marshall at 250-721-7815 or amarshal@uvic.ca. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Northern Scientific Training Program.

The purpose of this research project is to look at the connection between the Tahltan language and the land and the ways in which the Tahltan people pass on their knowledge and wisdom about the land through oral traditions, such as story-telling. Research of this type is important because the results will lead to the development of curriculum that brings our people's knowledge and wisdom into classrooms. It will also contribute to existing educational theories on learning and cultural sensitive ways of learning. In addition, it will make contributions to Indigenous methodologies and ways of doing culturally relevant and useful research.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a Tahltan language and/or cultural educator. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will include one to four in-depth interviews lasting approximately one hour each. These interviews can take place in your home or out on the land, or wherever you are most comfortable, and whenever it is most convenient to you. These interviews may be conducted individually or in groups. If you agree, I will record the interview with a videocamera or audio taperecorder and may also take pictures. Initialling here indicates that you understand that if videos, audiotapes, or photos are published or shown as part of the study results, you may be identifiable even if you are not named.

Videos may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____
Audiotapes may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____
Photos may be taken of me for:	Analysis _____	Dissemination _____

Participation in this study may cause some inconvenience to you, including becoming tired or fatigued during the interview process. If you are feeling fatigued at anytime, please let me know and I will stop the interview immediately so that you can have a break, so that we can reschedule the interview, and/or stop the interview altogether. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the knowledge and development of culturally relevant educational practices that connect Tahltan learners with their Elders through language, oral traditions, and the land.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given an agreed upon gift for each interview that you take part in to honour the sharing of your knowledge and wisdom. Examples of such gifts are food (e.g. jars of jam, berries, soapberries, fruit, smoked salmon, halibut, baked goods, coffees, teas), a scarf, blanket, something that displays your crest, or books. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research co-researchers. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time, or refuse to answer certain questions without any consequences or any explanation. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in the study analysis ONLY if you agree. In the event that you withdraw from the study part way through you will be asked if you want the data that you

have contributed to be part of the analysis. If you agree your data will remain in the study, if not your taped interview(s) will be erased and the transcript and all field notes or data associated with you will be destroyed. Should you withdraw from the study at any time the agreed upon gift decided upon is yours to keep. You will also receive a copy of any posters, DVD's, or booklets that result from the analysis of the research. To make sure that you continue to consent to participate in this research, at the beginning of every interview, I will check to see if you are still willing to participate in the research and remind you that you are able to withdraw at anytime.

Your anonymity will be protected if you request it. If you request anonymity, your name will not be recorded on the transcribed data, a fictitious name or coded initials will be used in place of your name and the researcher will be the only person who knows your identity. In the written report, your confidentiality and the confidentiality of the data will be protected as no names or identifying information will be used in the analysis of the research, unless you want to be recognized for your contribution to the research.

Your confidentiality will be protected by storing audio/video-recordings, field notes, transcribed data, and photos in a locked filing cabinet. Only the researcher will have access to the data. You will receive duplicates of any audio/video-recordings, copies of the transcribed data, and photos involving yourself. You can also consent to this data being made accessible to Tahltan community groups of your choosing. Copies of the research products (e.g. posters, DVD's, booklets) will be given to both Tahltan Band Councils and the Tahltan Central Council so that community members can have access to the materials. All data will be archived by the researcher for future generations. If your data is used in the future for educational purposes other than this research project, the researcher will seek your permission.

It is anticipated that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: directly with you, at community meetings in Tahltan communities, in a doctoral dissertation, in published articles, in presentations at scholarly meetings, and in community-based curricula.

In addition to being able to contact the researcher and the supervisors at the above numbers, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Human Research Ethics Office at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545 or ethics@uvic.ca).

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

Name of Participant

Signature

Date

I would like to be recognized for my contribution to the research by having my name appear in the analyzed data. Yes ___ No ___

I would like to have any data involving myself be made accessible to Tahltan community or political groups. Yes ___ No ___ (If yes, please list who you want to share the data with.)

A copy of this consent will be left with you and a copy will be taken by Judy Thompson.

The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan

Tahltan Learner (Adult) Observation

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *The Intergenerational Transmission of Knowledge and Wisdom through Language and Oral Traditions of the Tahltan* that is being conducted by Judy Thompson. My Tahltan name is Edōsdi and I am a member of the Tahltan Nation. I am a graduate student in the School of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and you may contact me if you have further questions at 250-627-8772 or jt@citytel.net. As a graduate student, I am required to conduct research as part of the requirements for a doctoral degree in Interdisciplinary Studies. It is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Nancy Turner and Dr. Anne Marshall. You may contact Nancy Turner at 250-721-6124 or nturner@uvic.ca, and Anne Marshall at 250-721-7815 or amarshal@uvic.ca. This research is being funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and the Northern Scientific Training Program.

The purpose of this research project is to look at the connection between the Tahltan language and the land and the ways in which the Tahltan people pass on their knowledge and wisdom about the land through oral traditions, such as story-telling. Research of this type is important because the results will lead to the development of curriculum that brings our people's knowledge and wisdom into classrooms. It will also contribute to existing educational theories on learning and cultural sensitive ways of learning. In addition, it will make contributions to Indigenous methodologies and ways of doing culturally relevant and useful research.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an adult Tahltan learner. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research, your participation will involve my observing you interacting with our Tahltan Elders and other Tahltan learners of all ages in cultural and/or educational events taking place in our territory. These observations will occur in groups. If you agree, I will record the observation with a videocamera or audio taperecorder and may also take pictures. Initialling here indicates that you understand that if videos, audiotapes, or photos are published or shown as part of the study results, you may be indentifiable even if you are not named.

Videos may be taken of me for: Analysis_____	Dissemination_____
Audiotapes may be taken of me for: Analysis_____	Dissemination_____
Photos may be taken of me for: Analysis_____	Dissemination_____

I do not anticipate that involvement in this research would involve any substantial inconvenience for you. There are no known or anticipated risks to you by participating in this research. The potential benefits of your participation in this research include contributing to the knowledge and development of culturally relevant educational practices that connect Tahltan learners with their Elders through language, oral traditions, and the land.

As a way to compensate you for any inconvenience related to your participation, you will be given a copy of any posters, DVD's, or booklets that result from the analysis of the research. If you agree to participate in this study, this form of compensation to you must not be coercive. It is unethical to provide undue compensation or inducements to research co-researchers. If you would not participate if the compensation was not offered, then you should decline.

Your participation in this research must be completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, you may withdraw at any time. If you do withdraw from the study your data will be used in the

Appendix G: Draft Tahltan Language Conversation Courses**Course Outline****Tahltan 101****Introduction to Tahltan Language Conversation I****University Credit Program**

Campus:	TBA
Term:	TBA
Instructor:	TBA
Office/Phone:	TBA
E-mail:	TBA
Times:	3 hrs/week
Credits:	3

Course Content:

This course is designed to provide the learner with the fundamental skills needed to build basic conversation. It will focus on Tahltan sounds, structure, vocabulary, grammar, phrases and sentences. The course will examine how the Tahltan language is connected to land, culture, and spirituality. Throughout the course, songs, stories, traditional activities and games will be incorporated. This course will focus on the ability to hear the language and the confidence to speak the language. The students will develop an understanding of the structure of the language as they practice everyday conversation.

Course Format:

Conversation Practice: 45 hours

Course Prerequisites:

None

Course Co-requisites:

None

Transfer Credits:

Tahltan 101 will be transferable to other colleges and universities throughout the province as a first year Aboriginal language credit.

Recommended Follow-Up Courses:

Tahltan 102

Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of Tahltan 101, students will be able to:

1. Introduce themselves and family members to the class.
2. Recognize and use abstract counting words.
3. Demonstrate an understanding and be able to express all Tahltan sounds.
4. Ask questions using Tahltan.
5. Sing Tahltan songs.
6. Have brief conversations in Tahltan.
7. Differentiate between dialects and define words within the Nation.
8. Read short story text in Tahltan.
9. Demonstrate an understanding of the protocols of the Tahltan Nation.

Required Materials/Texts:

Tahltan Tribal Council. 1991. *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons*.

Tahltan Tribal Council. 1994. *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary*.

Recommended Readings/Resources:

-*Kuji K'at Dahdahweshdetch: Now I Told All of You*.

-*Dene Tsedle Keda Kah Ejudedal: The Moose Hunt*.

-*Luwe Ek'anh Khidi: Tahltan Fish Camp*.

-Total Physical Response Guides

Evaluation Profile:

Attendance & Participation.....	45%
Journal Entries	15%
Presentation.....	15%
Tahltan Speech.....	5%
Midterm Oral Presentation.....	10%
Final Oral Presentation	10%
TOTAL	100%

Grading Profile:

A ⁺ = 95-100	B ⁺ = 80-84	C ⁺ = 65-69	P = 50-54
A = 90-94	B = 75-79	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A ⁻ = 85-89	B ⁻ = 70-74	C ⁻ = 55-59	

Learning Strategies:

The learning strategies that will be implemented in this course include: Total Physical Response (TPR), group conversation sessions/presentations, circle talks, songs, games, discussions, student teaching (students take turns giving commands in Tahltan), oral presentations/speech, brainstorming and journal writing.

Attendance and Participation (45%)

Attendance and participation are crucial in a language conversation course.

You will receive marks for each class that you attend (total 22.5%).

You will receive marks for each class that you participate in individual and group work (total 22.5%).

Journal Entries (15%)

You are expected to complete journal entries that help you reflect on your experiences and challenges while learning Tahltan. You will be assigned a variety of questions for you to respond to. You are expected to complete one entry per week (at least half a page single-spaced). The journals will be collected periodically for review.

Individual Presentation (15%)

You will be expected to give a presentation that will introduce your family members.

Criteria for grading are based upon: originality, content, clarity/language, and presentation.

Tahltan Speech (5%)

You are required to say the speech with the correct address and be able to introduce yourself. Criteria for grading are based upon: sounds, correct address, comprehension, and introduction of self.)

Midterm Oral Presentation (10%)

With a partner you will be expected to create a Tahltan conversation using ten sentences/responses to present to the instructors and the class.

Final Oral Presentation (10%)

With a partner you will be expected to create a Tahltan conversation using ten sentences/responses to present to the instructors and the class.

Course Schedule:

Week #	Topic/Assignments
Week 1	-Welcome/Introductions/Course Overview -Journals
Week 2	-Tahltan Communities -Total Physical Response (TPR)/word building, action commands -Journals
Week 3	-Discussion of cultural values -Identify of self in Tahltan -TPR/word building, action commands -Journals
Week 4	-TPR/word building, action commands -Grammar 1 st /2 nd /3 rd person -Journals
Week 5	-Tahltan sounds -TPR, word building, action commands -Journals
Week 6	-Grammar concepts -Conversation building/introduction of group members -Journals
Week 7	-“My family” -Introduction of family members -Conversation building/family members -Journals
Week 8	-TPR/word building, action commands -Grammar-absolutives -Midterm Oral Presentations
Week 9	-Greetings/Replies -TPR, word building, action commands -Journals
Week 10	-Conversation building/family names -Classroom objects -Journals
Week 11	-Full introductions of self -Family Presentation -Journals
Week 12	-TPR/word building, action commands -Journals
Week 13	-Abstract numbers 1-10 -TPR/clothing items -Journals
Week 14	-Days of the week/conversation building (What day is it today?) -Presentation of family scrapbooks -Journals
Week 15	-TPR/word building, action commands -Final Oral Presentations

Operational Details:**College Policies:**

Northwest Community College has policies on Academic Appeals (including appeal of final grades), Student Conduct, Cheating and Plagiarism, Academic Probation and other educational issues. Copies of these and other policies are available in the College Calendar and in the Library.

Attendance:

Attendance and participation are crucial in a language conversation course. Students will receive marks for each class that they attend (total 22.5%) and will receive marks for each class that they participate in individual and group work (total 22.5%).

Missed or Late Assignments:

If students miss a scheduled presentation or submit course work after it is due for medical or family reasons, they must notify the instructor as soon as possible. To ensure that all students are treated fairly, the instructor may ask for appropriate evidence to support the student's claim.

Cheating/Plagiarism:

Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's words, ideas, interpretations, insights, or order of points as your own. All work submitted must be your own words and content, and not written by a tutor or friend. Whenever you use sources for an essay, or assignment, you must avoid plagiarism by documenting them. The College calendar establishes procedures for plagiarised assignments.



Course Outline

Tahltan 102

Introduction to Tahltan Language Conversation II

University Credit Program

Campus:	TBA
Term:	TBA
Instructor:	TBA
Office/Phone:	TBA
E-mail:	TBA
Times:	3 hrs/week
Credits:	3

Course Content:

This course will continue to provide the learner with the fundamental skills needed to build basic conversation. It will continue to focus on Tahltan sounds, structure, vocabulary, grammar, phrases and sentences. The course will continue to examine how the Tahltan language is connected to land, culture, and spirituality. Throughout the course, songs, stories, traditional activities and games will be incorporated. This course will continue to focus on the ability to hear the language and the confidence to speak the language. The students will continue to develop an understanding of the structure of the language as they practice everyday conversation.

Course Format:

Conversation Practice: 45 hours

Course Prerequisites:

Tahltan 101

Course Co-requisites:

None

Transfer Credits:

Tahltan 102 will be transferable to other colleges and universities throughout the province as a first year Aboriginal language credit.

Recommended Follow-Up Courses:

Tahltan 201

Learning Outcomes:

At the completion of Tahltan 102, students will be able to:

1. Introduce themselves and family members to the class.
2. Demonstrate an understanding and be able to express all Tahltan sounds.
3. Continue to ask questions using Tahltan.
4. Sing Tahltan songs.
5. Recognize and be able to pronounce the months of the year.
6. Continue to have brief conversations in Tahltan.
7. Continue to read short story text in Tahltan.

Required Materials/Texts:

Tahltan Tribal Council. 1991. *Basic Tahltan Conversation Lessons*.

Tahltan Tribal Council. 1994. *Tahltan Children's Illustrated Dictionary*.

Recommended Readings/Resources:

-*Kuji K'at Dahdahwhesdetch: Now I Told All of You*.

-*Dene Tsedle Keda Kah Ejudedal: The Moose Hunt*.

-*Luwe Ek'anh Khidi: Tahltan Fish Camp*.

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A = 90-94	B = 75-79	C = 60-64	F = 0-49
A ⁻ = 85-89	B ⁻ = 70-74	C ⁻ = 55-59	

Learning Strategies:

The learning strategies that will be implemented in this course include: Total Physical Response (TPR), group conversation sessions/presentations, circle talks, songs, games, discussions, student teaching (students take turns giving commands in Tahltan), oral presentations/speech, brainstorming and journal writing.

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Attendance and participation are crucial in a language conversation course.

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You are expected to complete journal entries that help you reflect on your experiences and challenges while learning Tahltan. You will be assigned a variety of questions for you to respond to. You are expected to complete one entry per week (at least half a page single-spaced). The journals will be collected periodically for review.

Individual Presentation (15%)

You will be expected to give a presentation that will show what you have learned so far. Criteria for grading are based upon: originality, content, clarity/language, and presentation.

Tahltan Speech (5%)

You are required to say the speech with the correct address and be able to introduce yourself. This speech will build on the speech from Tahltan 101. Criteria for grading are based upon: sounds, correct address, comprehension, and introduction of self.)

Midterm Oral Presentation (10%)

With a partner you will be expected to create a Tahltan conversation using ten sentences/responses to present to the instructors and the class.

Final Oral Presentation (10%)

With a partner you will be expected to create a Tahltan conversation using ten sentences/responses to present to the instructors and the class.

Course Schedule:

Week #	Topic/Assignments
Week 1	-Welcome/Introductions -Course Overview -Journals
Week 2	-Classroom patter vocabulary -New song -Journals
Week 3	-Speech -Weather words/conversation building (What is the weather like today?) -Journals
Week 4	-Speech protocol -TPR/action commands -Journals
Week 5	-Storytelling/fluent speaker -TPR/word building, action commands -Journals
Week 6	-TPR/word building, action commands -Months of the year -Journals
Week 7	Months of the year -Seasonal Rounds -Journals
Week 8	-Conversation Building (What month is your birthday? What month is your sister's birthday?) -Midterm Oral Presentations
Week 9	-Speech presentations -Journals
Week 10	-Preparation for feast -Journals
Week 11	-Small feast
Week 12	-Oral presentations -Journals
Week 13	-Practice of conversation -Journals
Week 14	-Review of final presentation & conversation group/individual
Week 15	-Individual Presentations -Final Oral Presentations

Operational Details:

- College Policies:** Northwest Community College has policies on Academic Appeals (including appeal of final grades), Student Conduct, Cheating and Plagiarism, Academic Probation and other educational issues. Copies of these and other policies are available in the College Calendar and in the Library.
- Attendance:** Attendance and participation are crucial in a language conversation course. Students will receive marks for each class that they attend (total 22.5%) and will receive marks for each class that they participate in individual and group work (total 22.5%).
- Missed or Late Assignments:** If students miss a scheduled presentation or submit course work after it is due for medical or family reasons, they must notify the instructor as soon as possible. To ensure that all students are treated fairly, the instructor may ask for appropriate evidence to support the student's claim.
- Cheating/Plagiarism:** Plagiarism is the presentation of another person's words, ideas, interpretations, insights, or order of points as your own. All work submitted must be your own words and content, and not written by a tutor or friend. Whenever you use sources for an essay, or assignment, you must avoid plagiarism by documenting them. The College calendar establishes procedures for plagiarised assignments.