

THE YINKA DINI RESURGENCE ALLIANCE:
A COMMUNITY PROPOSAL

By: Carla Lewis
B.A. , University of Northern British Columbia, 2006

A Community Governance Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Faculty of Human and Social Development

We accept this community governance project as conforming
to the standard required.

Waziyatawin, Indigenous Governance
Supervisor

Karen Ogen, Wet'suwet'en First Nation
Community Supervisor

"[Enter Name and Department - delete if not applicatble]"
Departmental Member

[Enter Name and Department]
Chair/External Examiner



© Carla Lewis, 2010
University of Victoria

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

Table of Contents

<i>Snachalya</i>	3
First Words	3
PART ONE: RATIONALE	6
Wet’suwet’en (The People from Down Below)	6
Research Methodology: My Community Governance Project	10
The Need for Change	15
Value-Based Change	15
PART TWO: THE YINKA DINI RESURGENCE ALLIANCE	19
Organizational Framework	20
Overview of the Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance.....	20
Objective—Our Constitution	20
Our Mission	21
Our Vision	21
Our Goals: Revitalizing our Lifeboats	22
Lifeboats Summary	25
Our Methodology	26
Introduction	26
<i>Figure 1: Process of Resurgence</i>	28
<i>Figure 2: The Indigenous Research Agenda (Adapted from Smith 1999, 117)</i>	29
Research/Healing.....	29
Education/Decolonization.....	32
Action/Mobilization	38
Reflection/Transformation	40
Our Organization	42
Organizational Structure	43
Board of Directors:.....	43
Staff:.....	44
Affiliated Members:	44
Project Development:	45
Administrative and Financial Details.....	46
Timeframe	48
Location	49
<i>Awit Za (That is All)</i>	50
References	51

Snachalya

Snachalya in Wet'suwet'en means, "You have honoured me greatly". First of all, *snachalya* to my sweet baby Levi who arrived only two days after my first year of IGOV classes. Levi has brought me so much joy and totally transformed the urgency for me to return home and defend our lands. It is for Levi and our future generations that we must continue the struggle our ancestors began. *Snachalya* to all the *Dini ze'*, *Tsakiy ze'*, and *Skiy ze'* and everyone who participated in this project. I hope this proposal reflects your voice and desires for the resurgence of Wet'suwet'en! *Snachalya* to my family, especially to my mom whose devotion and endless support has helped me get through classes and trying times. To my Dad and brothers for always being there when I need a helping hand and for keeping our family so closely connected. To Brian for dropping everything and coming to help take care of your nephew so I could finish my classes. *Snachalya* to Molly, I am so grateful to have had you as my classmate, friend, and cousin throughout the IGOV experience, your words are strong and comforting and you are going to do incredible things for our people. *Snachalya* to all the other family and friends who are always there for a talk, a hug, or helping me move! *Snachalya* to the IGOV community, including my classmates, professors, administrators, alumni, and my advisors, for being so inspiring and devoted to the Indigenous movement. In the past, I felt as though asking for help was a weakness. These past few years I have really felt connected to the community of friends and family around me and am utterly grateful for the tremendous support and love that surrounds me. *Snachalya!*

First Words

This community governance project is intended to be an intermediary between knowledge and action. Indigenous governance and leadership require that our ideas move into the realm of action to better our lives as Indigenous peoples: to become healthy families and strong Indigenous nations. In short, decolonization and healing requires mobilization. Over the years, I have been daydreaming about creating an organization in Wet'suwet'en territory where we can conduct grassroots projects that contribute to the resurgence of our culture, our values, and our presence on the land. I have witnessed the degradation of our lands even in my short lifetime, and it must be stopped. I have spent many years learning about colonization, globalization, and the impact these things have had on our peoples' minds and homelands. I hold so much pain in my heart when I see the impacts of insatiable consumption on Indigenous peoples, on starving children, and our lands that are stripped clear of life and covered in a human-made wig of concrete and tree farms. I seek to build a better understanding of the world and how we can create a Wet'suwet'en resurgence where the modalities of our traditional society, laws, and values show us a way of life that does not compromise our humanity and our place in nature. This proposal outlines the need and many of the fine details that Wet'suwet'en may consider to develop such a movement. *The Yinka Dini Resurgence*

Alliance seeks to join together the individuals in our community who are committed to the resurgence of Wet'suwet'en in our territory. It seems as though a return of our people from the confines of our reserves and our houses back to the land is not fully possible at the present time. It is not too late for us. We can and we must bring back the traditions that support our lives as *Yinka Dini*, the people of the earth. We must struggle to regain the skills our ancestors perfected to live on the land while continuing the fight to live freely as true Wet'suwet'en. Wet'suwet'en alive today have all been impacted by colonization. Our minds, our values, our spirits, and our ways of living need desperate healing. We can re-create the knowledge our ancestors held and work to transform our realities through newfound understandings of our world. Through critical reflection we can look at our lives and determine what is real and true and what is a perversion of our human nature and our relationship to the world around us. This may seem like a daunting task, but it is really only our present generations that need healing. Our future children are in the womb and in the spirit realm waiting for us to wake up and build a healthy, bright future for them. All we need to do is guide the way and they will rise into their roles as *Dini ze'* and *Tsakiy ze'* who are willing and able to embrace a Wet'suwet'en value system--capable of learning our language and eagerly experiencing life intertwined with our relationship with Mother Earth--free from greed and want. Yet we know decolonization is an incredible task requiring massive shifts in thinking and systematic revolution. This project seeks to be part of the solution, rather than contributing to the ongoing destruction of our planet and humanity with the belief that our cultural teachings can guide us into lives worth living.

Part One of my Community Governance Project describes some of the issues Wet'suwet'en are facing in the current regime and summarizes the benefits of a resurgence of our culture and our values to enable us to transform our future. Over the years, I have been brainstorming methods to effectively achieve this cultural resurgence within the community. I recognize that this resurgence will have multiple facets and multiple layers with many people participating in this change. Our people are already taking numerous steps to bring back our culture and language and all of these efforts must be applauded for the bravery it takes to initiate and persevere with their visions. In Part Two, I propose what I hope will be a major force of this transformation and a way that I can use my knowledge, skills, and understanding to create a vehicle for some of this transformation to occur. Here I will outline some of the fine details of the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* so that in the very near future, we will be able to incorporate a society that will enable us to seek funding for research, education, and action projects within our community.

Initially, I looked at developing this project without any kind of recognition from the Canadian government. Unfortunately, at the present time, for us to access the kind of funding we are hoping to achieve and to remain accountable to our funding agencies, collaborators, and partners it is beneficial for us to register as a non-profit society. Therefore, the core of my Community Governance Project consists of developing some of the finer details that are required to establish a society and to simply provide the necessary legwork to get a project like this out of our minds and dreams and into action. This section will detail: our constitution, mission, vision and goals that will guide the

direction of the alliance. Next, I will go into detail the methodology of the centre and will focus a great deal on this section, as it is essentially this methodology that will make our work unique. This methodology will take us into the realm of education, action, and reflection where this knowledge can be reborn and help us create a living culture and lives based on our Wet'suwet'en values. Finally, I will summarize how the organization will be structured including: the administrative and financial details, timeframe, location and staffing.

This alliance has been established to enable our people to work towards the meaningful resurgence of our culture, language, and values. Rather than committing ourselves to one central location, this alliance will consist of individuals and groups who work in spaces across the entire Wet'suwet'en nation. Our projects may begin in our offices or in our homes crouched behind a computer, but the following processes that we commit our projects to undertake will occur in our community members' homes, community halls, classrooms, gathering places, and most importantly, out in the territory and in our hearts. Another purpose of this project is to create a platform for our researchers, educators, and activists to dialogue and engage the Wet'suwet'en people and others living and working in our territory. This proposal outlines some of the principles we hope to work by. This is only a starting point, of a fluid, living document that may transform as our beliefs of what encapsulates "research", "education", "action" and "reflection" evolve in our processes of "reflection". Like our culture, we cannot become stagnant, or we die. Hopefully, this proposal will be contribute to the dialogue to help us achieve our goals.

PART ONE: RATIONALE



Wet'suwet'en (The People from Down Below)

Wet'suwet'en is what other Indigenous nations called our people and it can be translated into English as “The People from Down Below”. However, as Mel Basil points out, like other *Dakelh* nations we called ourselves *Yinka Dini*, the People of the Land. In this document, Wet'suwet'en will be used to describe our people as a political unit, and *Yinka Dini* will be used as our term for “Indigenous” and to allow for the participation of our neighbouring nations and other Indigenous peoples who may want to get involved. Wet'suwet'en have lived since time immemorial in the territories surrounding the Bulkley and Morice River watersheds. Our summer villages of *Kya Wiget* and *Tse Kya* were our primary salmon fishing sites that were abandoned during the fall, winter, and spring. During this time, clan members moved to their respective *xiit bun yax* (winter lake house) or *klok bun yax* (fish lake house) that were dispersed across Wet'suwet'en homelands. The land was divided by clan and within each clan, by a house. For instance, my clan is the *Gitdumden* and my house is *Spookw'*. Each territory is governed by a house chief whose name has been passed down to successive generations to people who are given the responsibility to make decisions on their territory for the wellbeing of the house members. These sites were the primary areas the house would utilize for hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering their plant foods and medicines. In the old days, Wet'suwet'en were able to provide for all of their own needs, as well as

collected goods that would be brought back to the communal summer villages for the potlatch or for trade with neighbouring nations. Saskatoon arrow shafts, soapberries, furs, and hides were commonly traded for oolichan grease, coastal foods, and ornaments (Mills 2004, 39). It was the responsibility of hereditary chiefs to assure all of their people had enough food and resources to survive, to manage the use of land, and to enforce Wet'suwet'en laws, values, and customs.

During the first century of contact Wet'suwet'en remained in command of our territories and partook in the European fur trade to our advantage (Glavin 1990, 16). However, after British Columbia joined the Confederation all of this began to rapidly change. Following the recommendations made by the McKenna-McBride Commission in 1913, the clan system of land use was seriously undermined as reserves were established for the Wet'suwet'en. As a result, travel back to the summer villages became less and less frequent (Mills 2004, 114) and our own people began fighting over the tiny parcels of land we were allotted. The Wet'suwet'en were increasingly restricted to using only the reservation areas and similarly restricted from the ability to engage in their responsibilities for the protection of the territories as a whole. Wet'suwet'en lands were stolen--without cede or surrender--from the Wet'suwet'en and converted to Crown and private land for settlers. Through Canadian and British Columbian jurisprudence, colonizers asserted their will and took full control of the land and to this day continue to assert their power over Wet'suwet'en. Vandana Shiva in *Earth Democracy* (2005) affirms that this subjugation of land took place throughout the world as a systematized way for the colonizers to commodify land for the capitalist regime. She states that this 'enclosure of the commons' consists of five processes, which, is illustrative of the situation that has occurred for the Wet'suwet'en over the past century:

- 1) The exclusion of people from access to resources that had been their common property or held in common (i.e. clan lands to reserves).
- 2) The creation of 'surplus' or 'disposable' people by denying rights of access to the commons that sustained them.
- 3) The creation of private property by the enclosure of common property.
- 4) The replacement of diversity that provides for multiple needs and performs multiple functions with monocultures that provides raw material and commodities for the market (most commonly for the Wet'suwet'en—lumber and raw mineral resources).
- 5) The enclosure of minds and imagination, with the result that enclosures are defined and perceived as universal human progress, not as growth of privilege and exclusive rights for a few and dispossession and impoverishment for the many (Shiva 2005, 20).

This alteration of land title and use is considered by Shiva to be the primary reason why the 'natural' and 'sustenance' based economies have been overshadowed by the present global economy (Shiva 2005). Whereas the initial economies provided people the means

to live in relative harmony with nature, the latter has been the destructive force that exploits nature (including human beings) for the sole purpose of economic growth and the western ideology of ‘development’ (Shiva 2005, 53). Edward Benton-Benai an Anishinaabeg writer agrees:

The [elders] feel that the road of technology represents a continuation of a headlong rush to technological development. This is the road...that has led to modern society, to a damaged and seared earth.... The [other spiritual] road represents the slower path that Traditional Native people have traveled and are now seeking again. The Earth is not scorched on this trail. The grass is still growing there (quoted in LaDuke 1999, 198).

These differences in worldview have exasperated the struggle for land as Wet’suwet’en struggle for existence and the right to protect our territories from exploitation by the colonizers.

Our people were responsible for our peoples’ comfort—today they want oil, gas to live in comfort.

Gisdayawa, Alfred Joseph
(personal communication,
September 30, 2010).

Taiaiake Alfred, a Mohawk scholar and director of the Indigenous Governance Program says that we must “grasp the meaning of the traditional teachings, to understand their complex logic as a political philosophy whose power has been diminished not by time, but by our own lack of faith” (1999, xviii). Alfred calls the revitalization of these beliefs, values, and

principles ‘self-conscious traditionalism’ (xviii). Conscious Wet’suwet’en traditionalism means that we do not research our traditional knowledge and values just for the sake of preservation of a dying culture. It means we take radical, progressive steps to transform this traditionalism into lifeways that every Wet’suwet’en can choose to live by our values and principles. This means taking a critical look at the present and enacting methods to adapt our current way of life by making them congruent with our cultural beliefs. Some may be inclined to say, “We can’t go back to the past.” This is not just about going back, it is about going forward. Terry Glavin, a non-Wet’suwet’en researcher for the Gitksan and Wet’suwet’en Delgamuukw court case discovered what this may signify:

[Returning to the traditional system] meant abandoning the city-state, with all its bureaucracy, its boom-and-bust economies, its child-welfare superintendents, its police and its reserves. It meant returning to an integrated whole, a worldview that connected the dead with the living, the animals with the people, the laws of the earth with the laws of society (Glavin 1990, 62).

For anyone to take these types of extreme steps there must be a thorough vision that this is something that will actually benefit us. The obvious destruction and in-sustainability of current western practices is probably the best indicator that things need to drastically change.

Wet'suwet'en have attempted to maintain a degree of our traditional nature and sustenance based economies despite the occupation of our territories by colonial society. The *Denii Ne'aas* (potlatch, literally: the people coming together), was banned for over 100 years yet was practiced under ground and continued to be a place where decisions were made, Wet'suwet'en laws were acknowledged, and material goods and food items were redistributed. The potlatch goods however, changed over the years. Rather than foods collected from the territories and materials made from the earth, items such as towels, socks, strips of clothes, canned soup, and bags of sugar have become the norm (Mills 2004, 63). Trade between *Yinka Dini* (People of the Earth) nations and the subsequent trade with European fur traders began to be replaced by participation in the wage based economy and items such as vehicles and other manufactured materials and processed foods were purchased rather than harvested from the land. Vine Deloria Jr. in *Red Earth, White Lies* (2005) recognizes that this has been the struggle of all Indigenous peoples:

Technology made it certain that no tribe would be able to maintain its beliefs in the spiritual world when it was apparent that whites had breached certain fundamental ways of living in that spiritual world and in this breach had foreclosed even the wisest of their people from understanding the larger arena in which human destiny was being played out. Whites had already traded spiritual insight for material comfort, and once trade of material things came to characterize the Indian relationship with whites, Indians lost much of their spiritual heritage also" (4).

Participation in the capitalist market replaces cultural practices with invisible processes: greed, profit, and consumerism become the driving forces behind individual responses to meeting their needs--and desires (Shiva 2005, 19).

Nowadays, most Wet'suwet'en peoples out of—perceived--necessity and want participate in the Western economy. Jeep Cherokee, Nintendo, Kraft Dinner, and Maybelline are only a handful of the brand names that Wet'suwet'en people seek to buy. The younger generations in particular seem to be participating most fully in the consumption patterns of European culture. Top of the line clothes, shoes, and electronics such as MP3 players, cell phones, and game systems consume the lives of our young while traditional activities lay by the wayside. Children are taught a western education rather than a Wet'suwet'en education--out on the land gaining experiential understandings of the ways of the world. Many would believe that the old ways are outdated, no longer relevant to today's society. Our people are stepping farther and farther away from our culture and teetering on the edge of the melting pot being stirred by Canadian Society. Our rights are denied, access to our lands are contested, Indigenous curriculum in schools is close to nil, our language is dying, our *kungax* (oral history) is being lost, and our ceremonies and traditional knowledge are also being forgotten.

In Wet'suwet'en communities there is still hope; there are people who know the old ways and have taught younger generations as well. Furthermore, the combined knowledge that the Wet'suwet'en hold, along with the knowledge of our neighbours: the Netsooni, Nedut'en, Gitxsan, and other Indigenous peoples have the potential to restore

many of our traditional ways. It is extremely important that we attempt to recover our cultural values into our everyday lives as Mother Earth is bleeding to death below our feet; she is suffocating above our heads and drowning in polluted tears. This barrage of endless, needless consumption of goods, the mounding piles of waste and hazardous bi-products cannot go on indefinitely. Global warming, deforestation, and dead seas, are all consequential warning signs that we must make a radical change. Our homelands have been carved with highways and logging roads that inevitably culminate in these once protected areas being clearcut or mined. Pipelines stretch across our territory creating deep wounds in the earth resulting in the endless fear of our people that a spill will destroy sensitive ecosystems and we are currently being threatened with further pipeline developments that are carrying cancer, death, and destruction from the tar sands. With the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation, every inch of our territory is being impacted as trees are dying and being aggressively clearcut. Lush green forests are now a dead sea of red that no longer rustles in the wind. Band-Aid solutions proposed by nation states are not good enough “The ecological threats to sustenance demand a paradigm shift” (Shiva 2005, 61). For the Wet’suwet’en, this means going back to our traditional values and finding ways that we can transform our future based on our reciprocal relationship with Mother Earth.

Gisdaywa (Alfred Joseph) is one of the hereditary chiefs of my matrilineal clan, the *Gitdumden*. He and the house chiefs of the other Wet’suwet’en Clans: *Gilserhyu*, *Laksilyu*, *Laksamshu*, and *Tsayu* are the leaders and spokespeople of their representative territories that comprise the total of the Wet’suwet’en Nation. Gisdaywa recounts:

“Our people used and managed the natural resources for thousands of years, and the resources remained plentiful. The environment was cared for and kept healthy. It took 100 years of extraction by the Europeans to just about wipe out the resources and the environment. This was done without any regard whatsoever for the true owners of the land” (Gisdaywa, Alfred Joseph in Mills 2004, x)

Gisdaywa and most other hereditary chiefs are Elders in the community and were raised by traditional teachings on the land. They caution our young people to listen to the old ways if they intend to survive the hard times coming to us in the future. If we are going to be able to support ourselves during a natural or human-made disaster, we must know how to hunt, fish and preserve our foods. However, preparing for a disaster is only one part of the solution. We cannot participate in the destruction of Mother Earth only to be prepared when she stumbles. We must take extreme measures right now to reverse the destruction of our homelands over the last 100 years.

Research Methodology: My Community Governance Project

The inspiration for my Community Governance Project has evolved over the past five or six years as I have attempted to find solutions to the problems presented to me through my community involvement, degree in First Nations Studies at UNBC, the Indigenous Governance Program at UVIC and my experiences travelling to other

Indigenous territories, namely the Mikmaq, Maori, Kanaka Maoli, and most notably, the Maya Achi. Through my experience with the Maya Achi, I was able to witness a culture that abounded in their Indigenous language, participated in their ceremonies, and taught their children about their colonial history. While the impacts of colonization and genocide still cried out in every breath, at this particular school Achi teachers sought to embrace their cultural history, they taught their children how to live as proud Maya peoples despite the genocide that has been overtly perpetrated against them. Many of my friends there had witnessed entire villages wiped out and their parents, brothers, and sisters being raped, beaten, and ruthlessly slaughtered or disappeared. After decades of civil war and ongoing colonization, their culture prevailed in their daily lives and I felt weak in comparison. There was laughter in the dry hills even though the only worldly possessions people had were the clothes they had woven, with intricate patterns that signified their unique culture and identified them from other Maya Nations. I didn't speak my language, the cultural teachings I had learned were just surface understandings of a once strong people and I longed to go home and create ways for our people to fully understand and appreciate our values, language, and ceremonies that helped us express our worldview. Through numerous experiences, readings, lessons, and discussions I have honed my ideas to focus on the grassroots decolonization of our peoples. I imagined a centre that could help us heal from our colonized past and mobilize our people to transform our future. Through the creation of this centre, Wet'suwet'en could take control of the creation of knowledge and how we teach our children. As such, I had detailed many of the strategies and methods of how this may reflect Indigenous protocol and hoped to develop this work as soon as I was done with school. Impatiently, I persevered in the Western academy and grew more and more frustrated with being away from my family and the place I call home. The birth of my son, Levi, intensified this longing to return home. Luckily, I was fortunate enough to have travelled back home with him many times to visit his grandparents, to bring home his placenta, prepare his future with baby ceremonies, and attend clan meetings where he got to meet lots of his family members, chiefs, hear his clan songs, dance to our drums, and visit our traditional territories.

I saw the Community Governance Project as an opportunity to begin setting these plans into motion. While I had a strong belief that this was something the community also wanted and would see as beneficial, I wanted to ensure my project was rooted in the Wet'suwet'en community. Therefore, my research focused on engaging the community in a dialogue around ideas that can further inform the design of the centre and guide the proposal development. As I have conceptualized the project, I have come upon many questions that arise in order to make this project a truly, grassroots initiative. For example, I have a strong opinion of the needs in our community for us to create a resurgence of our culture and to get our people back out on the land. However, do these ideas truly reflect the needs and aspirations of the community? Furthermore, what does the community see as the most crucial needs for Wet'suwet'en regeneration and how do we, as a community, hope to achieve this? Finally, I wanted community involvement in the design of the project in areas such as the ethics of funding sources and issues relating to service and political overlaps within Wet'suwet'en territory. Ultimately, I want to determine if this is something that the community needs and supports; how the

community can make the proposal stronger based on our unique experiences; and to narrow the scope or direct the first steps of the research-education projects.

My research design, consisted of taking an informal approach to interviews. In the spirit of Paolo Friere, I chose to engage the community in a dialogue rather than using formal interview questions. As such, I hoped to explain my original vision of the research centre and have people respond with whatever sparked an interest for them and any ideas and thoughts they wished to contribute. Immediately after my last class was finished I returned home to the community in June 2010. I had lived away from the community since 2001 when I left for university. Over the years I had come home as often as possible and tried to remain in contact with many of my family members and friends. When I came home there were many, many people to reunite with and visit. Many people wanted to meet Levi and my original expectation of jumping right into dialogue with people was met with the reality of reintegration into the community. The clan meetings we had attended in the previous year greatly helped with this reintegration, however, I still felt like I needed to sit and visit with people rather than just stopping by and asking people for “interviews.” This transition would have been much easier if my “dialogue” was not initiated with the need to fill out a consent form. This form formalized the process rather than making it an informal discussion as I had hoped. Other problems related to this process included the need to take notes and use a voice recorder that made it feel more like a typical research interview. Nevertheless, I had amazing conversations with people that resulted in a lot of great ideas and some excellent quotes that are integrated into this document.

My reintegration into the community also included my nomination and election onto my community’s Indian Act band council, the Wet’suwet’en First Nation. As such I also got involved with activities occurring with the Office of Wet’suwet’en Hereditary Chiefs, the Carrier Sekani Tribal Council, and other band councils in the area. This involvement with the community immediately changed my position from a family and clan member doing research to that of a political character who had obligations to my community and to make decisions and take actions that contributed to the well being of our community members. This also brought many negative aspects to the research process, as our people rightfully are very critical of INAC Chief and Councils. I think I mitigated these issues by being very open about my intentions for the community including the need to return to our traditional governance, laws, culture, and values. Unity is a word that I have heard in the community since I was a child. Now I understand the complexity of this term and the obstacles standing in our way, namely the political overlaps not only between the Crown and Wet’suwet’en peoples, but amongst ourselves with the multitude of band councils, the hereditary chiefs, and clan members who all have their ideas on what is needed in our community. While many people are leaning towards economic development and the capitalist model, many, many more are beginning to see the damages done by this system and are longing for a resurgence of our culture and Wet’suwet’en way of life.

Between May and October of 2010, I had over thirty conversations with Wet’suwet’en community members and also five non-Wet’suwet’en who had previously

been involved in Wet'suwet'en research and community wellness. In all of these discussions, I began by giving a general description of the centre (similar to the description above) and allowed people to share their ideas. Most of the discussions ranged from 45 minutes to an hour and I found that every single person I spoke with had a lot of ideas and suggestions for how the centre could be a success. I found that I needed to provide very little input after my initial introduction and my comments thereafter were mostly to encourage more detail or explanation to their thoughts and ideas. On a few occasions, I asked people what they felt was the impact of colonization on their understandings or on some of the negative things they saw in our communities. Each time colonization was addressed we were led into another thought provoking conversation about the impacts of colonization on people's minds and how we needed to decolonize and be critical about our understandings of the world. Our interviews usually ended due to time constraints and participants were excited about the project and looked forward to future discussions on the topic. I closed the interviews by giving the participant a gift of *Lhudi Mustik* (Labrador Tea) that Levi and I had collected on two separate occasions as I taught him how to give thanks and offerings when collecting our medicinal plants.

In addition to these “dialogue” sessions where individuals were provided consent forms for the use of their ideas and words, I had many informal discussions that were not directly engaging the research topic, but inevitably guided my research. These discussions provided me with an update on where the community was at politically, actions people were currently taking, as well as learning more Wet'suwet'en words, and hearing some of our oral stories, values, and cultural practices. I also spent time reconnecting with the land and sharing this experience with my family, friends, and elders. In June, I attended a weeklong Wet'suwet'en Environmental Camp where fellow Wet'suwet'en organized a large camp to bring together Wet'suwet'en with environmental organizations to learn about direct action and other methods we can use to protect our lands. During this camp, I met individuals from the Indigenous Environmental Network, the Ruckus Society, and other organizations who are doing excellent work to mobilize Indigenous people. The camp also allowed me to spend time out on the territory and hear how happy that made people. I realized that this was definitely a goal for our people: to get back on the land and occupy it in a meaningful way. I also witnessed and experienced how much we need to learn to be able to do this. Initially, I had hoped to spend most of the summer out on the territory camping and living off the land. Through the Environmental Justice Camp, I realized that the warnings many people had given me about bears and whatnot were very real and that without first learning our traditional knowledge, survival, and hunting and gathering skills that running out onto the land was completely irresponsible, especially with a baby on my hip. While I was thoroughly disappointed, I also got a very clear understanding of what I, as an individual needed to learn, as well as what we needed to learn as a community. Some were very simple logistics for example, it was a very bad idea to head out onto the logging roads without a CB radio and that there are very large, societal needs like the ability to build community norms and laws that ensure we are all safe, happy, and healthy out on the land. While I didn't spend as much time out camping as I would have hoped, I did go out camping a few times, took a canoeing and kayaking course, spent time out on the lakes in a canoe or

pontoon boat, went hiking and biking in the mountains, picked lots of berries, and did our yearly salmon harvesting where we processed over 100 sockeye salmon. As such, I got to introduce Levi to *sus* (black bear), *neltoh* (deer), and many other animals, fish, and plant friends. Over the summer Levi got to splash in the waters of Francois Lake where I too had grown up digging in the pebbles and plunging into the chilly, soft waves.

Research Ethics. My research ethics are primarily guided by the Indigenous Governance Research Protocols, which also enforce my personal ethics including: respecting all beings, a special respect and responsibility to elders, hereditary chiefs, and other traditional knowledge holders. I have a responsibility to protect my culture, our land base, and make efforts to decolonize. Protecting the rights of my community, cultural knowledge, and the land for future use will always be of the utmost importance. At the heart of my research are the fundamental aspects of relationships, respect, and responsibility to all of Mother Earth's creations. This of course, includes the Wet'suwet'en peoples themselves who, like many other Indigenous peoples throughout the world have been researched as part of the colonization efforts of the west and need to be treated with respect. Maori scholar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith succinctly demonstrates these points:

From indigenous perspectives ethical codes of conduct serve partly the same purpose as the protocols, which govern our relationships with each other and with the environment. The term 'respect' is consistently used by indigenous peoples to underscore the significance of our relationships and humanity. Through respect the place of everyone and everything in the universe is kept in balance and harmony. Respect is a reciprocal, shared, constantly interchanging principle, which is expressed through all aspects of social conduct (1999, 120).

This community governance project is the beginning stages of development of the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance*. While many community members guided it's development and have supported the mission and goals, many more community members will be involved and participate as this project unfolds.

The Need for Change

“You can see throughout our territory all the stumps and the white people have pocketed millions and millions of dollars. All the money that has been taken off our territory, we want that back and we want our territory back to the way they were. Once we get back the money we would like to go back to our old Indian laws, to make life better for our people. The other Hereditary Chiefs as well as the other leaders are thinking about some way and it is with their words and my words that I am giving you today. It’s the generation that will follow me that will use these resources. I will not be able to use it. I am ready to go. That’s all”
(Maxlalex, Johnny David quoted in Mills 2005, 16).

Cultural Resurgence

The Wet’suwet’en have been in contact with Europeans for roughly 200 years. During this period, the sustenance based economy, traditional trade patterns, and potlatch have been infected with the western-based economy. Instead of having the community’s food and material needs being provided by local game and forest resources a great deal of our needs are increasingly met by participating in the wage based economy and buying manufactured foods and goods. Although a lot of our people continue to hunt, fish, and

We have family members who are dropping out of school. They are home playing Xbox or on the computer because we have really good access to the Internet now and people are buying computers. Nobody goes anywhere anymore.

Wilhawl (Lorraine Naziel)

gather plant foods, this change has resulted in a value shift--at times a complete loss of values--as our people participate in the exploitation of nature rather than participating and living in harmony with the land that must sustain us.

In numerous ways, Wet’suwet’en have fought for these traditional values to survive. However, over the years, we have lost a lot of our history; we do not participate as fully as we ought in ceremony; there are few fluent

speakers; and our ancestral homelands have been dispossessed, polluted, and more often than not, completely clearcut and strip-mined. It is becoming clear that even if we do end up with control and rights of our territories, it is necessary to recover our values and practices that define our *relationship*, *respect*, and *responsibility* to Mother Earth. We must ensure our activities in our territories do not continue to perpetuate Western capitalist ideals such as individualism, development, greed, and the damaging impacts of this system: pollution, waste, and the exploitation of nature. **If we are not living by our values—we are not Wet’suwet’en.**

Value-Based Change

The great hope is that those systems [we re-create] will embody the underlying cultural values of the communities. The great fear is that they will simply replicate non-

Indigenous systems--intensifying the oppression (because it is self-inflicted and localized) and perpetuating the value dichotomy at the root of our problems.
(Alfred 1999, 3).

Wet'suwet'en must begin to take more progressive steps toward our own self-determination. One way that we can do so is by taking measures to ensure that all Wet'suwet'en people are armed with the traditional knowledge of our ancestors and embrace the values inherent to living in harmony with Mother Nature. In this way, Wet'suwet'en can move forth in our daily lives, in governance, and our relations with others from a value-based point of view that is not willing to compromise our relations (land, trees, water, wildlife) that which we do not have the right to be compromising. Maintaining a sustenance-based lifestyle, to protect our children and the next seven-plus generations is absolutely critical to a healthy livelihood for all. Jeff Corntassel, of the Cherokee Nation and an Indigenous Governance professor believes that, 'sustainable self-determination' may provide answers for Indigenous peoples, including Wet'suwet'en. For our efforts towards self-determination to be sustainable, our actions must "be meaningful, it should be economically, environmentally, and culturally viable and inextricably linked to indigenous relationships to the natural world" (Corntassel 2008, 108). We have at the core of our culture a relationship to Mother Earth; the necessary principles of respect; and a system of governance and modes of daily living, which require a responsibility to all our relations. A culturally viable existence requires us to radically rethink the way we walk in this world and to re-create our way of life rather than simply trying to Indigenize Western concepts. Some of our people have lost their way but rediscovering our values and putting them into action is the most important step for our people to take. This shift in thinking can bring about change as our people go forth into the future.

Wet'suwet'en *kungax* (oral history) holds the knowledge of our ancestors that has been passed down since time began. Antonia Mills, an anthropologist who has worked extensively with Wet'suwet'en, says that *kungax* literally means 'trails of song' "that offer maps of the spiritual journey the Witsuwit'en continue to make. The *kungax* describe the moral order of the Witsuwit'en universe, in which the abuse of animals or people and their territorial rights and marital rights upsets the moral balance - a balance which must be restored by the people in order to avoid serious consequences" (Mills 2004, 75-76). Waziyatawin also makes the connection between Indigenous oral stories and our morality, "historical and mythical stories provide moral guidelines by which one should live; they teach the young and remind the old what appropriate and inappropriate behavior consists of in our cultures" (35). Much of our *kungax* has been recorded by anthropologists, missionaries, and community researchers, especially by Mills and Glavin for the *Delgamuukw* evidence. However, a lot is also missing and needs to be recovered through community-based research and increased opportunities for sharing knowledge amongst generations. This

If we chop down a tree we got to use it. We can't waste it. Same thing with fish. If you can't use it, pass it on to someone who will.

Tabinalyah (Alma Andrew),
Gilseryu, personal
communication July 7, 2010

section will look at the current records of Wet'suwet'en *kungax* that describe our values and practices of relationships, respect, and responsibility.

Relationships. As Wet'suwet'en people our traditional values come from our connection (our relationship) with our land base. In the past, we had to know our land intimately to be able to survive in a cold and wintry climate. We believed in reincarnation and that our people could come back as other beings: Salmon, Eagle, Bear, and probably even Mosquito and as such we treated all of creation as our brothers and sisters. Respect was always given and taking lives for our consumption was an act filled with ceremony and spirituality. Our value for relationships extended from the land to our clans (our crests are the bear, wolf, frog, beaver, fireweed) and into our relationships with one another. Rather than solely focusing on our immediate family as our relatives, our families and kin were our entire clan whose relations were passed down through our mothers. We were connected to the rest of the nation through our father clans and we all knew who we were and who our relatives were and treated cousins as siblings and aunts and uncles as parents and grandparents. Our relationships with our people, our land, and all other beings ensured that we were able to live in harmony with each other and live sustainably on our land. Our governance, laws, values, ceremonies, warriorism, and dispute resolution were sufficient to ensure that any disturbances to these relationships were dealt with according to the necessary protocols. Furthermore, we relied on the relationships with our neighbouring nations for trade, and we all had trespassing laws and consequences for anyone who dishonoured our *Dini ze'* (Male Chiefs) and *Tsakiy ze'* (Female Chiefs) authority to govern their respective territories. This helped us ensure that all of our people had access to territories to hunt, fish, and live.

Respect. Our relationship with Mother Earth was reflected in how we interacted with her and treated her with respect. Respect is an integral part of all of our interactions with others. In the past, we demonstrated this respect by only taking what we needed from our *yinta* and when we collected things we gave an offering and said a prayer of thanks. For example, we only took the branches and spruce roots we needed to make snares and snowshoes, we only took the amount of a plant that was needed for our medicines. We didn't take anything that we didn't need just for it to go to waste. Furthermore, anything we did take, we ensured we used all of the parts we could. Moose is the prime example. We used all the cuts of meat—including the nose and stomach, we used the hide for clothing, the antlers for tools, anything that was unusable was returned to the land with ceremony and thanks. We also treated our people with respect. Unlike in Western societies, women were able to hold high-ranking chieftainships and were respected and wise people in our communities. Children were respected as individuals and were brought into the world with the most sacred of ceremonies and raised to fulfill their roles as caretakers of the land and people. Acts of disrespect in our communities were brought to the potlatch where the issues were discussed and if an act of disrespect had been proven, a shame feast would be held to dishonour the individual and possibly even their entire family. With extreme cases of disrespect, the person would be ostracized from the community.

Responsibility. For us to live communally and to depend on our very existence on our relationship with the land, every Wet'suwet'en had many responsibilities to ensure our community remained united, to ensure the health of the land, to ensure our children learned how to live off the land and to be able to participate fully in our society. Our responsibilities included: teaching our children, giving supporting as father clans, collecting food for redistribution at feasts, upholding our laws and values, giving thanks and offerings to make sure our lands continued to give us meat, plants, berries. We also had many responsibilities linked to ceremony and to the powers of women as life givers. For example, a menstruating woman could not pick berries because it would result in the berries feeling disrespect and they would not return. If we did not fulfill our responsibilities, our people would starve, our lands would go to waste, our children would be injured or killed, the salmon would not return.

This is why we are in trouble today. Our relationship with the land was severed by the colonization of our lands by people who had found another way to live—based on buying and selling rather than hunting and collecting. Now, all of our societies have gone dangerously astray. We kill each other, making money and buying things subsumes lives, wasting massive amounts of water, greed and uncontrolled population growth has turned our beautiful planet into a garbage heap. Relationships are for individuals not communities, respect is for money not for Mother Earth, responsibilities are to making money in search of happiness. We have been forced to live this way. Our ways were viewed as “savage” and our minds have been at war as we struggle to find our way within a colonized state that has aggressively attempted to kill us and our culture. Do we surrender? Do we assimilate or do we fight for a way of life our ancestors created that is clearly righteous?

PART TWO: THE YINKA DINI RESURGENCE ALLIANCE



Organizational Framework

Overview of the Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance

It's in all of our minds. It's in all of our hearts. It can't come from that way of thinking where we are like, "What can the great white hope provide us to better our lives?" It's got to come from our own people. It's more like drawing on that very way of life that we want and gain interest with our young people. Make it attractive and make it necessary enough that we would say, "Not only are we living this culture and this history again, but look at the health improvements we are making. Look at the quality of life shot right up and we didn't ask for the UN to recognize it. We didn't ask the government of Canada to sign on to some declaration to achieve it and we just went out and took what is ours—which is our responsibilities." In our language, Inuk Nu'uten is the same word for laws and is the same word for responsibilities. They're not separate. It's not something that precedes one another or that follows. It is the observation of our natural world. What has been most unnatural is having everything done for us. That mentality of: "What else can I get out of this? What's in it for me? I want it all. I want it now." We are taught to consume to fill a void. To get away from that lifestyle, to better our world. We must take a lead in reducing our consumption getting back to the simplicities. We can still have online, we can still have some of the things that keep us linked with our world around us but to have the availability of the trail, the paddling, the hunting, right there rather than feeling like we need time away from our nine to five to get access to that. My nine to five can be that. It can be more than a nine to five. I think in our history when all people are combining their efforts, I think tops you put in about three hours of hard labour. When everybody is involved. There is no greed, there is nobody thinking, "Oh I have to be the best at this so that it's only me." If everyone is sharing in the work then there is no such thing as hard work you have all the rest of that time to spend on family, connecting and strengthening our spirituality, bringing back our dreamworld, bringing back the visions, so there is a lot of lifeboats out there that need awakening.

Mel Basil, Gitksan (Lax Gibuu) and Wet'suwet'en (Gitdumden)
(personal communication, July 27, 2010).

Objective—Our Constitution

We are Wet'suwet'en who are taking our self-determination into our own hands. To recover our values and worldview and transform our future to once again be proud and strong Wet'suwet'en by strengthening our culture, language, laws, and governance, protecting our *yinta*, and raising up our children. We are healing from our colonized past and creating a living culture—a resurgence of our presence and our future.

The Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance will:

Provide opportunities for *Yinka Dini* researchers, educators, activists, and the community at large to work towards a resurgence of our cultural values, to decolonize, and to return our presence on our territories.

Provide our people the opportunity to:

- Re-occupy and strengthen our relationship with our territories,
- Relearn our culture, language, and values and transform our lives to accommodate these beliefs.
- Fulfill our responsibility to protect Mother Earth
- Engage in dialogue about social and environmental justice
- Transform our futures to live truly as Wet'suwet'en people
- Heal from our collective, colonized pasts and confront ongoing processes of colonization.

Our Mission

The Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance is an independent, non-profit, non-governmental grassroots organization that seeks to revitalize Wet'suwet'en values of relationships, respect, and responsibility that are inherent to the integrity of our culture and the protection of our families and *yinta*.

Our Vision

Our vision is that future generations of Wet'suwet'en and all our relations will learn to live peacefully with one another by adhering closely to our traditional values:

- We see our people living by our values and governing systems to ensure humans recognize their relationships, respect, and responsibility for all our relations. We believe in our leaders and rest easy knowing they are making the right decisions for all of us—a united, Wet'suwet'en Nation.
- We hear the heartbeat of the drum, the history in our songs, and the spirit in our stories breathing voice back into our language. We celebrate, as our children are welcomed into the world with Wet'suwet'en lullabies, raised within our worldview, and share their stories in our mother tongue.
- We feel the strength radiating from our children who have grown up on the territory and know our lands intimately. We embrace the healing and decolonization that has occurred in the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of our people.
- We smell the clean fresh air, the fish in the water, and the dew on the flowers and recognize this place as home. We raise our hands to our

people who have gained the strength to live on our lands, as true and proud Wet'suwet'en.

- We taste the pure, toxin free abundance of berries, plants, fish, animals, and birds that have offered themselves to us as we have learned to treat them as our kin, respect them as our mother, and fulfill our responsibility to protect them for eternity.

Our Goals: Revitalizing our Lifeboats

Our goals are to educate and empower Wet'suwet'en to revitalize our traditional values, implement them, and adapt our current way of living to ensure cultural survival in our homelands. In the next section, I will look at the methods we hope to use to achieve our goals. Here I will look at six areas of focus, which are interlocking features necessary for the resurgence of Wet'suwet'en. These principles are based on the 2009 Indigenous Leadership Forum presentation by Waziyatawin, a Wahpetunwan Dakota warrior and scholar (personal communication June 10, 2009).

Building a Community of Resistance. At present, our people are weakened from our traditional healthy, cultural, value-laden lives while the liberalism pushed by the settler government has crept its way into our mentalities. Many of us now believe that the individual has rights over and above the community's rights. We work to feed our own families and ourselves rather than providing for the entire community. Many of our people take more than their share of community resources and seek monetary wealth in attempts to fulfill their lives. Taiaiake Alfred in *First Nations Perspectives on Political Identity* (2005) discusses in detail this problem we are faced with:

Generations of individual separations and losses have contributed to an erosion of the very foundation of our collective selves, our communities and nations. It is the damage done to the national consciousness of our peoples, the wearing thin of our nations' cultural and political foundations, and the weakening of our collective sense of community that present the most significant threat to our continuing existence as new generations of our people emerge and grapple with new realities in the struggle to survive culturally, politically and spiritually. Without a rooted, strong and cohesive *collective* identity upon which to base an individual's sense of self, our young people stand little chance of being able to maintain our nations' struggles for survival and to preserve our nationhood in any meaningful sense. Indeed, individual healing for those affected negatively by colonialism's cultural disruptions can only occur in the context of rooted, strong and cohesive communities" (Alfred 2005, 2).

I believe that many Wet'suwet'en people understand that unity is something that needs to be built within our communities; however, it definitely has not been achieved. Waziyatawin says, we must have a community as individual survivalism will not last (personal communication, June 10, 2009). All cultures have lived in a community to support themselves for all time. Now globalization threatens local sustainability as all of our goods and services have become commodities that are bought and sold, often

distanced from personal interaction and are global in scale. Our people now participate in this system and are often defined by our position as wage labourers. We must diversify our specialties and once again become warriors, trades people, hunters, cooks, educators, etc. to ensure there are people in our community that can meet all of our needs on a local level rather than needing to rely on other people's products and services. With community building we will be able to meet our emotional, spiritual, and educational needs as we revitalize each area of our nation's unity.

One of the most important factors of building a community is that there is power in numbers. We cannot protect our land, our water, and our food from others who covet our resources unless we work together. In building a community we must also be consciously building a culture of resistance. That is, our people will not think that building the lifeboats above is a radical or unnecessary act, but one that is crucial to our survival both physically and culturally. We will come together to embody the relationship to the land that makes us Wet'suwet'en and embrace the resurgence on our self-determination and clan-based governance. As Jeff Corntassel says, we must "train our young ones to live their responsibilities" (personal communication, June 11, 2009). His analysis can be explained in more detail through his work on sustainable self-determination. He says:

I am urging that communities act to assert their powers and responsibilities as nations in order to promote an indigenous-centered discourse on sustainable self-determination. In order to reposition indigenous peoples philosophically and politically in a movement for community, family, and individual regeneration, it is critical to begin with indigenous community-based responsibilities in order to open new pathways for sustainable self-determination. For substantive decolonization and community regeneration to take place on a wider scale, the identification and implementation of non-state, community-based solutions should take precedence. For substantive changes to occur in the state system, indigenous responsibility-based movements must supplant rights-based movements (Corntassel 2008, 121).

We can do this by revitalizing traditional child rearing and community based education; promoting land-based activities; and creating warriors willing to defend our lifeboats. Waziyatawin realizes what a daunting task this is, however, she stresses that we cannot wait for everybody to jump on board (personal communication, June 10, 2009). Taiaiake and Jeff agree that change happens one warrior at a time. They explain, "Our people must reconstitute the mentoring and learning-teaching relationships that foster real and meaningful human development and community solidarity. The movement toward decolonization and regeneration will emanate from transformations achieved by direct-guided experience in small, personal, groups and one-on-one mentoring towards a new path" (Alfred and Corntassel 2005, 613). As our people become stronger and focused on becoming united, our nation too will be strengthened.

Ensuring and Protecting a Water Supply. Water, as for all humanity, is our most precious resource. However, like the rest of our planet, it is being polluted, commodified, and dammed. Our lands are rich with water—lakes, rivers, streams, ponds, bogs, glaciers, and snow. We must learn how to protect our water for its drinking purity

and to hold our numerous fish and wildlife that rely on it. To do so we must educate ourselves on the politics of water and become active in protecting it for future generations. Furthermore, we must strive toward rebuilding our village sites alongside our water sources as most of us have been displaced from these prime locations for habitation by the reserve system and private property.

Assuming a Sufficient Land Base. We must all understand the historical and current forces that are impeding our ability to live and survive on our Wet'suwet'en lands while learning methods to protect our *yinta* from industry, government, and settler's destruction, mismanagement, and unlawful assertions of ownership over Mother Earth. As such, we must strengthen our clan governance system, which once allowed for all of our people to survive and sustain our *yinta* for all future generations. Furthermore, we must create new methods to protect, defend, and heal Mother Earth from people who are driven by greed and selfishness and hold them accountable for the damages they have done to our people and our lands.

Realizing Food Sovereignty. Food is one of our most basic needs and one that has defined and sculpted our culture as hunters, fishers, trappers, and gatherers. For us to realize our food sovereignty we must recover our traditional food sources, develop new ways such as sustainable agriculture and horticulture, renew our traditional trade networks, methods of food distribution, and principles of communal sharing. Also, we must learn about the current global processes of industrial agriculture, pesticide use, bio-diesel, and junk/processed foods that are feeding the outrageous health concerns in our communities, killing peasant farmers around the world, and degrading the land, air, and water.

Recovering Wet'suwet'en Knowledge. The recovery of our knowledge is crucial to us being able to survive on our land. Our knowledge derives from generation upon generation of our ancestors living on our land and developing ways to sustain, govern, and entertain ourselves. We managed our lands, secured our borders, and traded with our neighbours. Our activities whether big or small were guided by our own values, norms, and laws in the Wet'suwet'en way--our worldview. Now, Western ways of doing things often conflict with our ways. The settler knowledge is foreign to this land and relates more to the market economy than it does to the land. Therefore, we must not only re-learn our traditions but must also un-learn the *nedo* (white man) way. Our knowledge once was deep and filled every part of our lives and was passed on to our children from our elders--living as Wet'suwet'en people. To recover this knowledge, we must once again learn from the land through direct experience and traditional childrearing not solely through textbooks and classrooms.

Knowing Local Ecology. Wet'suwet'en in the past lived sustainably because of the relationships we had with the land and all other beings. For Wet'suwet'en, it is important for us to strengthen the areas of our culture that we now hold on to and resurrect the foundation of our culture--our values and beliefs--that guide our relationships with other beings. For the most part, traditional knowledge is ecology. However, since our lands have been transformed from places where relationships were sacred to a place where

human relationships are considered superior to all others, it is important that we consider the damages done and the impacts of human pollution and resource extraction have on our lands. To clean up this mess and understand the impacts of toxins and waste on lives and lands we may need to utilize Western science, hopefully our own Wet'suwet'en scientists who are rooted in traditional knowledge.

Lifeboats Summary

While everyone that I interviewed fully appreciated the concepts discussed in the lifeboats and had many ideas for projects under each of these umbrellas, most people cited the need to begin with projects involving food sovereignty and methods to get people back onto the territory during all four seasons. Furthermore, people cited that this act of re-occupying our territories to hunt, fish, and collect was also an assertion of our rights and title, provided answers to our communities' current state of poverty and government dependency, and fully encompassed all aspects of the above mentioned lifeboats. Some people discussed fishing as a focus for our activities since it is already such a strong aspect of our culture while others suggested a focus on hunting, trapping, and plant foods as areas that needed strengthening.

Building a community of resistance was also seen as a necessary transformation in our community that most commonly translated as "unity". *Disunity* is seen as one of the major impediments to all of our goals, projects, and visions for our community. The disjuncture between the hereditary chiefs and clans, the Office of Wet'suwet'en and the Indian Act chiefs, the divisions within and amongst families, the pro- and anti-industry camps, and the simple but glaring issue of geographical distance between the communities are only a sample of the issues that are creating this dysfunction in our nation. Nevertheless, I believe there are two projects that need to take place consecutively to help us achieve our goals of a Wet'suwet'en resurgence. Unity perhaps, can remain the broader technical term for the political arena and the rejoining of family groups and the clans. Meanwhile, building a community of resistance could foray more in the arena of the research centre where the decolonization and reculturation of our people's bodies, minds, and spirits are sought at an individual and a communal basis. Both of course remain interlocking, but for the sake of maintaining a scope and direction for the research centre, it seems to be important to maintain some kind of distinction. To better describe this difference, let's say that unity is a project that needs to occur at a governance level. Our clan and house chiefs must work together within the feast, the Office of Wet'suwet'en and other organizations must work together for our common goals. Meanwhile, the research centre and other community projects and services may work toward understanding our history, the impacts of the world around us, strengthening our culture and language, and educating our people so that we can be strong leaders, vital community members: healers, warriors, knowledge holders, etc. to ensure that the cycle of our nation's development continues to realign itself with our Wet'suwet'en values.

Following up from Waziyatawin's discussion at the *Indigenous Leadership Forum*, she has written an article for the second edition of the *Decolonization Handbook* where she concludes, "If we can collectively commit to re-simplifying our lives, shedding

our materialistic values and recovering Indigenous knowledge, this will naturally contribute to a renewing of a relationship with our homelands. This will compel a return of the profound understanding that our survival is intertwined with the survival of the land, and that one of our fundamental obligations as Indigenous Peoples is in ensuring its health and protection” (Forthcoming, 27).

Our Methodology

Introduction

The purpose of the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* is to create a vehicle for Wet’suwet’en researchers, educators, and activists to be able to develop projects, obtain funding, and have a common strategy, vision, and goals as we work towards the decolonization and resurgence of Wet’suwet’en peoples. At present, we continue to work within a capitalist system because we have bills to pay, debts to get out of, restricted access to our lands, and gaps in our traditional knowledge which prevents us from being able to live freely as Wet’suwet’en people. I do not want to spend my life working to consume, participating in resource extraction, or simply not acting. As Mel Basil stated above, I want my nine to five to be the act of cultural resurgence. I believe this organization holds the possibility of this becoming a reality.

We have a lot of educated, cultural people and we need an outlet for those people to be working with our community to strengthen our nation. A lot of these people have many similar ideas but we aren’t working together so we can start bridging that divide and making education useful. We are told to go to school, and learn our language, and learn our culture but those things don’t go together. We have to go away for school and there is no outlet to bring that expertise back to the community. We need a way to bring all these people together for the betterment of our community in order to work together. It is the logistics of having a job and bringing money into the community but also bringing likeminded people together.

Molly Wickham, Gitdumden
(personal communication, September 28, 2010).

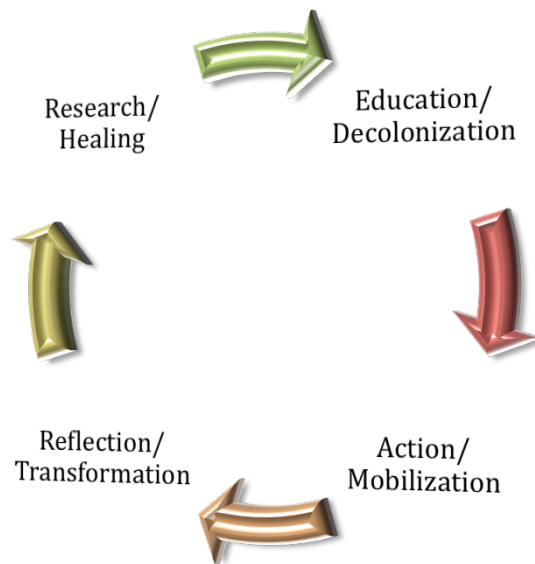
As a person who has spent a ridiculous amount of time in a classroom 25 years out of my humble 30, I have come to appreciate the value of research. Typically, research has been something that has been imposed upon us and is a negative word. However, over recent years Indigenous scholars such as Waziyatawin, Taiaiake, and Corntassel at the IGOV program and others such as Linda Tuhiwai Smith have worked hard to decolonize research, create a field of Indigenous research, and push an agenda that hands control of the research process and results back to the communities that are being researched. Further, when you deconstruct the word research, it really is just a fancy western way of saying: the collection of new knowledge and understandings (or searching again). It is what we have done for millennia as we observe our surroundings, understand our relationships, and adapt to new ways of doing things based on our conclusions. In the academy (university), research

like everything else Westerners do, has become a commodity. Researchers are often elites who hold the power over knowledge generation and how it is shared with the public. They use fancy terms and dissect minute details of everything in order to get published or get a raise or tenure as a professor. In the real world, research does not need to be solely about writing a book or patenting an idea. For us, research can be used as a tool whereas we can seek “research” dollars to fund our projects of knowledge regeneration, knowledge creation, and spaces of understanding our history and contemporary context. It is a dangerous slope however, where we could get caught in the same trap as Western scholars. We do not want to be creating knowledge for knowledge’s sake. It must go further. Therefore, in this section I will discuss the “resurgence” process which seeks to begin a cycle of research that is transformed into education which leads to action and finally looks inward to reflect on what we have learned and begin again the process of creating new ways of being.

My ideas have generated from a number of different areas: my university education; talking with Elders and community members; travels to other Indigenous territories (specifically with the Miq’kmaw, Maya, Kanaka Maoli, and Maori); and researching education initiatives, research centres, and cultural camps. This research centre will take the best attributes out of these last three areas and meld them into one Indigenous, community-based organization that is intended to foster the development of Wet’suwet’en who are intent on regenerating our traditional values and ways of living on the land. Therefore, Wet’suwet’en and others who choose to work in solidarity with the Alliance will be required to commit to indigenous research methodologies and to ensure that research projects are followed up with education, action, and reflection which will be discussed in detail below. As I mentioned earlier, this process is the beginning of a discussion, a first step for our organization, but it is not the “be all/end all” solution. As we progress and begin our projects we will also have to move through this process and reflect on its efficacy and suitability for our goals of resurgence.

The *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* will be a fluid site where Wet’suwet’en can learn and relearn our history, our culture, our struggle, and be committed to developing Wet’suwet’en solutions to our problems and sharing this information with our community. Rather than being drowned in abstract theories and ideas, we will be action and experience motivated to make the projects applicable to our daily lives and our future goals of self-determination. The Alliance will be based on understanding process rather than understanding facts. For this, I have developed a “Process of Resurgence” (see figure 1). This process is to ensure that all of our projects include all the aspects required for knowledge to be transformed into a way of living—creating a living culture. This process is cyclical, or perhaps even more of a spiral that begins with a research project that is intended to heal our community, it spirals out of the hands of the researcher into the minds of our community members who can take this knowledge and with a critical consciousness begin to decolonize our understandings. With this new knowledge our projects will mobilize the people to take action and make the necessary changes in our lives and finally to reflect on what we have learned and what we have done so we can know if we have succeeded, if we need to work harder, and to discover where we must go from here.

Figure 1: Process of Resurgence



This diagram was initially made to outline solely the “resurgence” process. That is, a description of our projects from start to finish to ensure that our research becomes an act of community resurgence rather than a typical research projects. However, after looking at the model of “The Research Agenda” by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith, which she says can be incorporated into practices and methodologies, I clearly saw how the two were interlinked and thus you can see that Research is combined with Healing, Education with Decolonization, Action with Mobilization, and Reflection with Transformation. This model helps describe the resurgence process in more detail and demonstrates how each of the stages are interlinked.

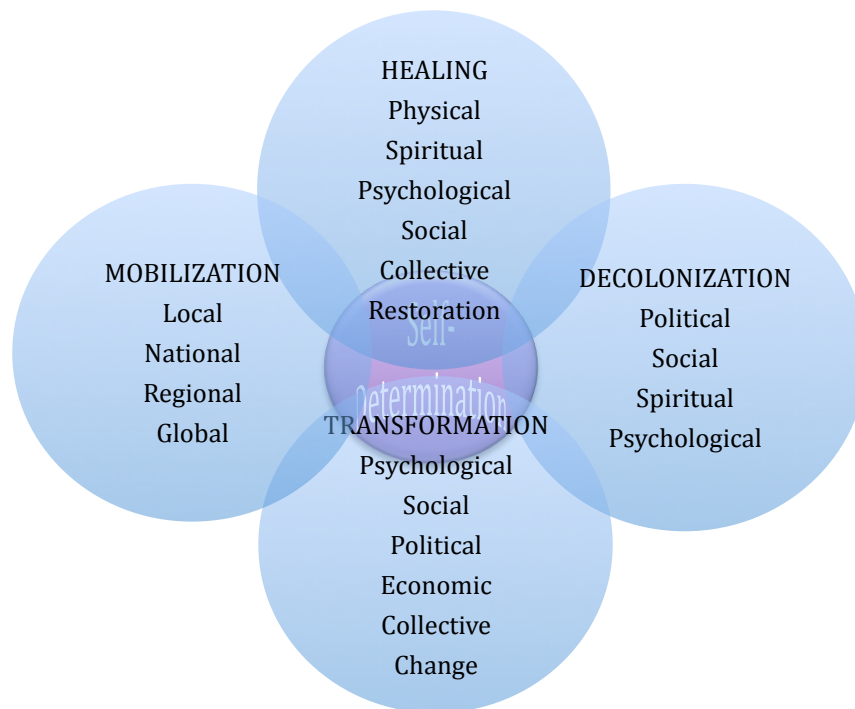


Figure 2: The Indigenous Research Agenda (Adapted from Smith 1999, 117)

Research/Healing

The research stage of the “Resurgence Process” is where the more typical forms of knowledge gathering will take place. Of course, this process will be guided by Indigenous Research protocols. As Molly Wickham, a member of the Gitdumden clan and MAIG graduate states, “The research that I envision goes back to what traditional [i.e. Wet’suwet’en] research would look like and the fact that our people have been doing “research” forever, and that means involving community and working together as a community for the betterment of our nation” (personal communication, September 28, 2010). Research then means bringing back our traditions, our values, and beliefs; that is, recreating knowledge. Here is where we determine the most critical needs in the community and seek funding to do our projects. Our projects cannot be taken lightly and they cannot be done simply out of curiosity. We have a responsibility as researchers to put our skills to use for the betterment of our community. As such projects should reflect the Indigenous Research Agenda above and have a sharp focus on healing. Smith details further that healing can be in the areas of physical, spiritual, psychological, social, collective, and

I see the getting the dollars, collecting the information, the recording it, as the easy part. It’s the piece that’s been done over and over and over again. It’s the living organic that is the most exciting piece of your work. ...To me it’s in the actualization of [the research], even if it is a small seed.

Ross Hoffman, First Nations Studies Chair,
University of Northern British Columbia
(personal communication, August 27, 2010)

restorative healing. Whether our projects are bringing back a cultural practice, reintegrating a traditional value, or investigating our laws and governance in practice, we should be able to name and describe this activity and how it will bring healing to our people and our land. As we recover parts of our culture that have faded over time, it is hoped that we will also recover respect for our culture, for ourselves, and find strength in taking action as a community. Furthermore, taking precautions to prevent the destruction and to heal Mother Earth will provide a cumulative effect on the health and well being of Wet'suwet'en peoples and 'all our relations' who reside in our territories.

Culture instills pride back into the community. It gives us confidence and a healthy lifestyle.

Tara William, Gitdumden
(personal communication, June 17,
2010).

The current standards for Indigenous research can guide our projects, however, it may also be necessary for participants of the alliance to outline our own research protocols, ethics, and guidelines unique to the Wet'suwet'en to ensure we are always taking the concerns of our unique culture and

community into consideration. There has already been a considerable amount of research done in the Wet'suwet'en communities and the Office of Wet'suwet'en and some of the bands already have some of these research protocols in place. As such our first projects will likely consist of compiling information that has been documented through the Delgamuukw evidence, treaty research, land use studies, language recovery, and other community projects. However, the point of this research is to make sure that we are creating a living culture. Therefore, it is important that we take this information and identify any gaps in this knowledge. A lot of this past research has been a description of "what" we used to do and is less focused on "how" we did it. For example, it is now common knowledge that Wet'suwet'en used fishing weirs to selectively capture salmon and other fish. Reading this in a book however, does not tell us--or show us--how to build a weir and how to use it on the water to actually catch a fish! Furthermore, it does not look into it holistically and enable our people and our youth to feel the spray of the water on their faces while they place a weir in the river, it doesn't teach them how to pray as they collect the willows to make the weir or how to give thanks for the fish they caught. It doesn't teach them how to clean, fillet, smoke, and cook. It doesn't teach them to understand the damages that were done to our livelihoods when the weir was banned. It doesn't teach them about imperialism and colonization that made it possible for others to assert their power over us, and it doesn't say anything about how we are going to take back control over how we relate to salmon and the impacts of pollution, commercial fishing, and salmon farming.

From this example we can clearly see how research and education are interlinked. Essentially the research end of things will mostly be determining what the project will be, finding the resources to do so, outlining the expected outcomes for each of section of the resurgence process, and facilitating the knowledge exchange. I have seen many projects fail because they try too hard to separate research from education by relying on communities to pick up the books and articles they write. Our projects then, will begin by looking at what we the knowledge we have available to us. We can then find the

information or people who can teach us how to recover the areas that are missing. Furthermore, as the researchers are also community members and obviously people who need to learn these things also, it makes sense that research does not happen in isolation and that as many people as possible participate in the recovery of our knowledge and values.

Researchers will have to be adept at facilitation and curriculum design and have these goals in mind from the onset. Our research methodology will have to be flexible enough to ensure that we are investigating holistically and that our topics are focused on areas in which our people need healing:

Possible Research Methods:

- Literature reviews and knowledge gap assessments
- Interview Elders, hereditary chiefs, clan members, youth
- Investigate other Indigenous nations, organizations, projects
- Oral histories and stories
- Land use mapping, monitoring land use
- Investigating the impacts of industry, settlers, and government
- Environmental testing—ex. Mercury levels in water, soil contamination.
- Investigating habitat and health of our relations
- Investigating “How to?” through experiential, holistic learning (Ex. Resurgence of the fishing weir or creating a permaculture garden.)
- Investigating social strengths and weaknesses.
- Establishing research protocols, ethics, and guidelines for anyone conducting research in our territory.

Then again, it's the curriculum thing. It's finding people who still remember or else digging up information that is relevant and that is the research part of it.

Wilhawl (Lorraine Naziel)
(personal communication, July 18, 2010).

People need to learn what is going on in their world around them and to see what is impacting their lives. It's not just decolonization we are after but also a process of letting go and reaching out for something that we really are. [Decolonization] is a process, it is a beginning stage. So after unlearning we must also relearn. It means resisting what we were told and what we are expected to do....After that decolonization movement there has to be a reculturation movement: dreamers, people who are creating, inventing. There will still be a western world surrounding us. There will be a layer of the Wet'suwet'en community that is still colonized but they must learn that the law in this land is coming back and it hasn't gone anywhere. In order for it to succeed it can't stand alone, our neighbours must re-establish their laws as well.

Mel Basil, Gitxsan (Lax Gibuu) and Wet'suwet'en (Gitdumden)
(personal communication, July 27, 2010).

Education/Decolonization

I have heard that Education is the modern buffalo. Well, for us, we want the buffalo back--maybe not in Wet'suwet'en territory though because they don't eat salmon! One of the main purposes of this Alliance will be to develop education projects based on the things that *we* think are important and need to be taught in ways that hold meaning to *us*. First, the residential school and now the public school systems have greatly failed our people and both have aggressively participated in the disconnection of our people from the land, the colonization of our minds, and the loss of our culture and language. Our work will seek to subvert the efforts to turn our children into well-behaved, wage burners. As Wet'suwet'en peoples with a history of oppressive education our goals for educating our young people have to be recreated by us, for us. For us, Wet'suwet'en Education means teaching our children how to live in the world, how to 'succeed' by our standards, and to live with each other and on the land as Wet'suwet'en!

The core of the projects completed by the Resurgence Alliance is in the realm of education. Our research is simply a vehicle for us to build capacity and educate our children, youth, and our community at large. Through our projects we will *relearn*, we will *discover*, and we will look *critically* at our lives and create new ways to live. Therefore, our projects will go further than simply teaching "how" to do things but we will also continually ask "why?" Why did history unfold the way it did? Why are things the way they are? Why are our Elder's lonely? Why are our leaders confused? Why do the things we buy cause pain and destruction if we look into their origins? Why? Why? Why?

We must train our young ones to live their responsibilities.

Jeff Corntassel, Cherokee
(personal communication,
June 11, 2009).

Critical Consciousness. For us to understand what is going on in the world around us we have to open our eyes and our ears and begin to challenge our assumptions. Leroy Littlebear calls this our "Tacit Infrastructures" that is, "beliefs, views, interpretations that we carry or use to interpret reality that we don't challenge" (personal communication, June 8, 2009). Our people have many tacit infrastructures that have become fortresses around our ability to think our way out of the problem we are in. The resurgence alliance can be a guiding hand to help people begin to trust our ability to look critically at our lives, our struggle, and begin to challenge this reality. Paolo Friere, in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) reassures us that "every human being, no matter how 'ignorant' or submerged in the 'culture of silence' he or she may be, is capable of looking critically at the world in a dialogical encounter with others" (32). This can be comforting when we think about the challenge that is before us. What is necessary in this struggle is to give people the opportunity to challenge their ideas. Friere lead the movement for raising critical consciousness and his teachings will no doubt guide our education movement. The basics of Friere are: that to trust in the people, to engage them in dialogue, and to focus on creating action and reflection out of our discoveries. Michael Yellow Bird in his article "Tribal Critical Thinking Centres" summarizes the characteristics of an individual who has learned to think critically:

- Listens, reads, and observes with a high level of critical consciousness
- Perceives and anticipates social, political, and economic contradictions that exist in society and understands how to take critical action against the existing oppressive situations
- Thinks, feels, and acts with independent purpose
- Is unafraid to engage with unfamiliar ideas, worldviews, theoretical perspectives, people, and cultural context.
- Is willing to enter into dialogues and encounter ideas, knowledge, and experiences that challenge their preconceived notions of the world
- Understands that the world is not a static, closed system and that existing problems and challenges have multiple solutions
- Understands the principle of equifinality, which is the state of allowing, producing, or having the same effect or result from different events (Friere in *Yellow Bird* 2005, 21).

Yellowbird goes on to say that “Good critical thinking utilizes evidence from several sources: cultural traditions and stories; scientific research and studies; expert authorities; personal intuition, experiences, and dreams; experimentation; observation; memories; creative teachers and mentors; emerging technologies; and accumulated knowledge, to mention only a few” (2005, 15). In reality, the process of relearning our culture goes hand in hand with the process of critical consciousness and can be as simple as understanding why we are losing our culture, language, and values that we are now taking action to recover.

The methods we use to educate ourselves and the community is absolutely critical to the success of our projects. The typical ‘banking’ method of learning criticized by Friere consists of the rote memorization of facts that is typical to the methods used in the public school system. Our education efforts then, will be guided by Friere’s pedagogy and all of the styles of learning that have been inspired by his work: popular education, adult education, and peace education. More importantly, our programs will be based on traditional Wet’suwet’en education, which is similar to other forms of Indigenous Education across Turtle Island and the rest of the world. Indigenous education is based on experiential learning, traditional child-rearing practices, observation and listening, storytelling, songs, art, and dialogue. Furthermore, for the Wet’suwet’en, education takes place in the feast hall where our culture, history, and history in the making are expressed through our laws and governance through speeches, songs, and dance.

To support these learning styles, the “classroom” will take place in existing locations across our territory to create the learning environment in our lives rather than attempting to create another institution: camps, cabins, smokehouses, potlatch halls, homes, created spaces (such as birthing centres), youth programs, farms, and other spaces all across our territory can become sites of learning. Furthermore, we can extend this curriculum—or more preferably invite participants from—existing institutions: daycares, health centres, public schools, and post-secondary institutes as a way to create outreach for our programs and share the knowledge that we have recovered.

A Living Culture. While, decolonizing our minds through raising critical consciousness, we will be also working on recovering our culture, our values, and our language. From our research, we will develop educational programs that incorporate this knowledge with critical consciousness and provide Wet'suwet'en people the opportunity to participate in activities that allow us to create a living culture. Our 'curriculum' will not take place in workbooks, articles, or classrooms. Our lessons, rather, will embrace experiential learning, create opportunities for people to practice our culture and traditions, and open up spaces for us to speak our languages, raise our children, and live our lives in a Wet'suwet'en way. For example, rather than the WRN writing a book on the "Wet'suwet'en Fishing Weir: The Implications of Salmon Farming on Wild Salmon" we will develop a program where our communities can re-learn how to make a fishing weir. We will look at this holistically and learn every step from the collection of the plants to make the weir, the ceremonies for gathering, and how to make and set the weir. Furthermore, we will discuss the implications of salmon farming on our lakes and rivers and other impacts on the health and wellbeing of salmon. We will brainstorm methods to protect salmon, so that we as Wet'suwet'en can fulfill our responsibilities to our brother, Salmon. Following are some examples of ways of teaching and learning that the community identified:

- Land Based Activities
- Experiential Learning
- Field Trips
- Culture Camp Curriculum
- Environmental Justice Camps
- Workshops using methods from Popular Education
- Ceremonies
- Free Schools
- Community Outreach
- Artistic Expression: Theatre, Dance, Song, Carving, Painting Etc.
- Potlatch
- Policy Advice
- Storytelling
- Talking/Healing Circles
- Guest Speakers
- Parenting Classes
- Creating Bi-Lingual Accessible Materials: Websites, Children's Books, Posters, Booklets, etc.
- Rebuilding infrastructure: longhouses, pit houses, birthing centres, etc.
- Gardening

Community Involvement. One of the biggest questions I had while going into this project was to find out from my community what kind of projects would get people interested in actually attending them. I asked this question of a number of community members who gave great suggestions on how to get the community, particularly Elders and youth involved:

- Have special places where people can go to connect and learn.
- Have good chaperones to help look after the children.
- Give people, especially Elders respect and acknowledgment for their time.
- Take into consideration the Elders energy levels and independence.
- Speak loud enough for Elders to hear and have translators.
- Serve traditional foods, tea, and snacks.
- Make the programs fun and engaging—not boring!
- Get out of classrooms/boardrooms and do hands on learning.
- Have the community participate in building and creating physical spaces and artwork.
- Create opportunities for people to socialize, especially for youth to hang out with friends and meet new ones.
- Facilitate outdoor activities and combine history with fun stuff like kayaking, canoeing, or river rafting.
- Begin projects that create a continued visual presence on the land, like modifying trees along new trails or rock painting.
- Teach wilderness survival and *real* hunting. Give kids badges or merits for their skills learned.
- Don't repeat the wheel. That is, don't do projects that have already been done.
- Build new places on the land where people can revitalize traditional activities.
- Teach people about their yinta, their clans, chiefs, and protocol on accessing territories.
- Give people the opportunity to spend time out on the territory.
- Use alternative art forms such as theatre, graffiti, and music to interest the youth.
- Make sure programs aren't reserve based and benefit all Wet'suwet'en people.
- Don't teach youth warriorism and hunting without the necessary values, understandings, safety measures and training, and make sure to follow the Wet'suwet'en way.
- Have people present who know First Aid and take all safety measures into consideration.
- Don't perpetuate dependency by providing big honorariums or travel but do compensate people for their knowledge.
- Host celebrations and ceremonies.
- Be open and honest about intellectual property and protect communal information.

Out of all the discussions, 'fun activities', 'survival skills', and 'learning about the potlatch' were key themes that most everyone brought up. Apparently, fun to the youth means getting outdoors, being with friends, and not being too structured. People's concern for survival skills was mentioned on a scale of interest from being solely for information purposes or for an ever-growing concern for the environment and the economy. People often mentioned that the Elders have been foretelling of times like these for years and their warnings, while taken seriously, were not acted upon. Furthermore, I believe people's concern for 'survival skills' can be translated as a want for the recovery of traditional knowledge as the academy has defined such a way of life....surviving off the land. For the peoples' interest in the potlatch, an obvious but

abstruse fact was that if we want to embrace Wet'suwet'en culture and values, the feast is our most precious institution that holds all of our values, songs, stories, dances, laws, history, governance, and most importantly our relationships to one another. Time and time again, people referred to the participation and revitalization of the potlatch as the most critical act that we must take to strengthen our culture and get people back to the land in a meaningful way.

A primary focus in all of the education projects is the integration of our values into our activities and ways of knowing. Although we usually talk about making our values consistent with our contemporary reality, what will be encouraged here, is transforming our contemporary reality to conform to our traditional values. At present, our people are not living sustainably in our territory and our leaders are often being bought into "development" projects that are threatening the land and lives of those within our territories. To accomplish this reintegration of our traditional values, each research project will have to make an effort to recover our values from our oral and documented history and begin to reconstruct methods to reincorporate these values into our lives. Although, an in depth investigation of our traditional values was not possible with this project, here is a small example:

- We don't waste anything.
- We show respect for what the creator has given us through proper handling, giving thanks, and through ceremony.
- We honour our relationships with all living beings by protecting them.
- We manage our lands for all our people and all living things.
- We have a responsibility to uphold the integrity of our territories for future generations.
- We respect our Elders, our women, our children, and all of our community members and involve them in decision-making.
- We respect the boundaries of other clans and other nations.
- We have a responsibility to teach our young ones about our culture, our society, and how to live on the land.

On their own, these values can seem like romanticized visions of the past. The way things used to be, our utopia. These things can be revived. For instance, in the past, our people believed that you could not waste anything you harvested or killed for consumption. Today these values are exceedingly threatened and our people are continually pressured to buy manufactured goods and processed and packaged foods with byproducts that will eventually end up in landfill sites. Our research and education projects then, could look at developing methods for Wet'suwet'en peoples to go beyond the reduce, reuse, recycle rhetoric and discuss methods to go back to our traditions of 'now wasting anything' perhaps becoming reduce, reuse, recycle extremists but also going back to a simpler way of living is really the only way we can fully achieve our goals. To convince people of this necessity, we could do projects that demonstrate the grotesque amounts of garbage that are produced by today's society, garbage cities with children scavenging for food beside vultures and crows, by-products, tailings ponds, ocean dead zones, tar sands, and all the other disgusting and irresponsible waste that

human beings are creating in our world. For our education projects to work, they must continually bring us back to our traditional values. To help us understand them and why they were such an important part of our existence. In this example, Wet'suwet'en peoples did not waste for many reasons: we respected the animal/plant for giving life to us, we needed it for food or materials, there weren't any garbage trucks to dump it in someone else's backyard, and the cost of obtaining these things were off of our own hard work and labour not off the backs of children and underpaid factory and plantation workers. Key to all of these reasons was that we consumed locally and were in a reciprocal relationship with the forces that gave us life and we lived and died by how we interacted with the land. Getting our children and our community back onto the land and experiencing the fresh air and the wonders of nature will be our first step in connecting them emotionally to the necessity to drastically change the way we live our lives.

Getting the youth involved and educated! It's instilling who they are and where they belong and that is really missing in a lot of young people. With my son, I ensured he came out to the territories and told his uncles they had the responsibility to bring him out too. Our responsibility as Wet'suwet'en women and mothers we need to have a paradigm shift in how we raise our kids. And, I think we are doing it.

Wilhawl (Lorraine Naziel), (personal communication, July 18, 2010).

Language. The Wet'suwet'en language is on the verge of extinction. Current efforts for language revitalization consist of the development of Wet'suwet'en dictionaries and grammar books, music books with CDs, CD-ROMs, and curriculum development within the public education system and daycares. While these are all excellent resources for our people, the Resurgence Alliance will work towards integrating these language materials, creating our own, and ensuring that all of our projects have a language component. For instance, projects can create bi-lingual documents, web pages, and integrate language research into each project. This organization may not have the capacity to bring back the language entirely, but, by assuring that all of our projects include language, we can ensure that we are contributing to its revitalization, not hindering it. After generations of our people being forced to speak English our language has lost its practicality in an everyday sense. The Elders who speak Wet'suwet'en in the potlatch are our last speakers and there isn't anything available at the moment to facilitate a transfer of the language from the Elders to the younger generations. Not only will this develop language capacity, but also by hiring community translators and language teachers, we will provide fluent speakers the opportunity to work in language development and interact with the youth.

They aren't interested in [language] at all. It has to come from the family rather than have someone teach it.

Tabinalyah (Alma Andrews)
personal communication, July 7,
2010).

Action/Mobilization

Education in itself is a form of action, but I think for the goals we are trying to achieve here, it is important to make a distinction between the two to make sure that our recovered knowledge and our new understandings are put into action rather than just stored away in our minds. Action may take many forms and it will be during our discussions from the previous section where we will have to begin to realize, “Now that we know what is happening and why...what are we going to do about it?” Personally, I get really frustrated when people spend too much time trying to find the one, perfect answer to our problems. Usually, there are multiple solutions and multiple fronts that need to be performed for us to be able to make a difference, to be able to uphold our culture, values, language, and our responsibilities. However, I do think there are two main forms of action that Wet’suwet’en peoples must take after going through this process of research and education. First, we must take action and enact these understandings into our way of life. If we learn how to hunt or sing our clan songs...we must go out hunting and sing our songs. Furthermore, we then have the responsibility to share this knowledge with others, especially our children, rather than keeping it to ourselves. Second, we have to defend our ability to continue living as Wet’suwet’en

The songs and dances and way of life all must be in action because truly that is where our laws reside is in the way our children can learn how to pick berries and how they learn to serve those very same berries in the feast hall and how they are received.

Mel Basil, Gitxsan (Lax̱ Gibuu) and Wet’suwet’en (Gitdumden) (personal communication, July 27, 2010).

peoples and as such, we must defend the land that sustains us. On the one hand, it may be fine to say that we are going to go back to this way of life, because we have decolonized, but, the rest of the world is still going full hog in their destruction of the planet, and we must do everything in our power to fight the systemic structures, globalization, industrialization, neo-liberalism, and commodification, that are rapidly bringing Mother Earth to

her knees and rotting the minds of humanity. Wazyatawin states: “If we are serious about committing to the path of decolonization, we must also be serious about challenging the nation-states that perpetuate our colonized existence. We must dare to think about how we might achieve a decolonized existence in the fullest sense of the word” (Forthcoming, 30). Methods to achieve this will have to be discussed and fleshed out by all the participants. Educators and activists can facilitate these discussions and as the alliance grows we can begin to discuss methods that have failed, that waste our time, and search for methods that work. For this to occur, we will likely have to look outside the Wet’suwet’en territories at other peoples’ initiatives that have achieved positive results. We also have to have a clear vision of what our goals are. By strengthening our traditional values: those that are tied to our relationship with the land rather than the Market-based economy we can be more certain in our actions.

From my experiences being back in the community, it is clear that our people are lacking this common vision. People’s actions range from complete inaction to making deals with industry to setting up blockades and rallies. While many people seem to want

industry to stop their overtly gross resource extraction. Many also, want them to stop these projects while continuing to be able to live with the luxuries that this global machine provides us with: SUVs, televisions, supermarkets, Styrofoam, and tinfoil. Here I must also condemn myself. I long for a life of living off the grid, on the territory, being one with nature, having a community of people to share this with, and a big happy family. For me, developing this Resurgence Alliance is one of my actions that I hope will build the capacity in my community to fight for these things, to open up our eyes, and to allow us to fight for our right to live our responsibilities and break free, from our dependency (our dances with dependency if you will) on the *exploitation* of Mother Earth and *addiction* to money and consumption.

I have also witnessed that many people are afraid of actions that may be seen as violent: warriorism has been brought up as actions that may be seen as terrorism, violence, or abuse. However, I think this stresses the importance of developing the first two stages of the resurgence cycle: that is, the recovery of knowledge and decolonization of our ways of thinking and knowing. Maybe violence is not the answer, but we need to realize that Mother Earth is fighting a war while we sit on the side lines or argue about what to do, our people are dying of suicide, addictions, obesity, car crashes, cancer, and other illnesses attributed to the ongoing colonization of our lands and minds. Mel Basil, an advocate for strengthening our traditional warriorism states the following:

To challenge disenfranchisement we have been pushing the warrior concept and that its not about war and terrorism. That is a perspective of the Western world; it's an invention from media. To the spin doctors in the media world....the warrior is vilified. When you look at the warriors of today and of the past they were people who were connected to the communities. They were people who got their hands into the work, got their bodies strong, got their minds strong, their spirits strong and connect to the people because that connection was strong. So was the will to protect that connection. That if there was something threatening that connection the warrior was able to step in and intervene and it wasn't just through violence. It was through negotiation skills, feasting, protocols, and war itself even had a protocol and the warriors knew that. It wasn't just going out and bludgeoning someone there was consequences that followed and the warrior was willing to accept those too. It was their responsibility. The warrior concept is not to be feared it should be given the respect it deserves. ... It's that colonized mind that is bringing up the fear of the warrior. They are afraid to decolonize because in one sense it means letting go of that edge they have acquired. That edge that I'm the one to uphold these responsibilities. I'm the warrior. But when we see them making, over and over and over again, making moves that don't involve the people. That don't involve those concepts, it doesn't involve the community, then it isn't a warrior move. The warriors look to the communities for their guidance, their principles and their ideologies. It has to come from the people. Because the people must decide how they want to be protected. It's not one person or one group who are the elites who get to make decisions for the people. (Mel Basil, personal communication, July 27, 2010).

The Resurgence Alliance will give us the ability to educate, to dialogue, to research our solutions so we can be confident in the actions we choose. Some of the actions the community identified so far include:

- Protesting/Rallies
- Modifying Trees
- Re-establishing Trail Networks
- Re-occupying our territories
- Refusing to get permits and licenses for our activities
- Issuing our own permits and licenses
- Establishing No-Go Zones
- Public Relations/Building Relationships
- Raising Awareness
- Issuing injunctions
- Demanding reparations and clean ups for existing industrial developments

Reflection/Transformation

Through the Alliance's methodology, I have conveyed that Research, Education, and Action are often intertwined overlapping features of a process of resurgence that we are seeking. Similarly, reflection is another important aspect of this process that will be important to include every step of the way. However, it is important to ensure that reflection, especially following action, is an integral step to our growth and understanding and therefore should be a part of the process that is seen on equal footing to our other activities.

Reflection is quite simply an act of looking at our actions and ourselves and taking the time to thoroughly understand the events, feelings, and outcomes that transpired. Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985) state that reflection is where people can "recapture their experience, think about it, mull it over and evaluate it" (19). For instance, let us say that one of our projects leads us from recovering knowledge about habitat and characteristics, oral stories and our relationship with the elusive mountain lion. Our actions may take us to preserving the cougars' habitat, specifically in the mountainous areas of our territory that are under pressure from mining, logging, and farming. While positive outcomes are obviously favoured, we will no doubt come across hurdles in planning and in the effectiveness of our actions. Rather than feeling defeated in any of our mistakes, through reflection, we can discuss the things that went wrong and learn from our mistakes. Through the same process, we can rejoice at the successes we achieved and make sense of the feelings that arose within us throughout the process and action. Furthermore, through ongoing reflection we can determine if we are not yet ready for certain forms of action. Friere confirms that:

Action and reflection occur simultaneously. A critical analysis of reality may, however, reveal that a particular form of action is impossible or inappropriate at the present time. Those who through reflection perceives the infeasibility or inappropriateness of one or another form of action

(which should accordingly be postponed or substituted) cannot thereby be accused of inaction. Critical reflection is also action” (Friere 1975, 128).

Critical reflection is an essential characteristic of our transformation process and will help us analyze our movement towards freedom. Friere goes on to say that critical reflection “increasingly organizes [ones] thinking and thus leads them to move from a purely naïve knowledge of reality to a higher level, one which enables them to perceive the *causes* of reality. If revolutionary leaders deny this right to the people, they impair their own capacity to think—or at least to think correctly. Revolutionary leaders cannot think *without* the people, nor for the people, but only *with* the people” (original emphasis, Friere, 1975, 131). Michael Yellowbird stresses the dangers of a group that is not self-critical. He discusses the work of Dr. Irving L. Janis who coined the term “Groupthink” which occurs when a tight knit group of people, usually from a similar background fails to look at alternatives and take irrational actions. The effects of groupthink include:

- 1) Illusion of invulnerability—Creates excessive optimism that encourages taking extreme risks.
- 2) Collective rationalization—Members discounts warnings and do not reconsider their assumptions.
- 3) Belief in inherent morality—Members believes in the rightness of their cause and therefore ignores the ethical or moral consequences of their decisions.
- 4) Stereotyped views of out-groups—Negative views of “enemy” make effective responses to conflict seem unnecessary.
- 5) Direct pressure on dissenters—Members are under pressure not to express arguments against any of the group’s views.
- 6) Self-censorship—Doubts and deviations from the perceived group consensus are not expressed.
- 7) Illusion of unanimity—The majority view and judgments are assumed to be unanimous.
- 8) Self-appointed “mindguards”—Members protect the group and the leader from information that is problematic or contradictory to the group’s cohesiveness, view and/or decisions. (Dr. Irving L. Janis: http://www.psysr.org/about/pubs_resources/groupthink%20overview.htm quoted in Yellowbird 2005, 24).

Active, critical reflection can allow us to circumvent the possibility of groupthink to ensure that our actions are always consistent with our values. Methods to help us through this reflection process include:

- Holding regular talking circles
- Hosting guided reflections (open ended questions)
- Ensuring everyone gets a chance to speak and have any questions answered
- Being accountable and transparent to all participants
- Addressing any concerns that arise within the Wet'suwet'en citizenry.
- Maintaining connections with other groups, organizations, and allies.
- Being open to criticism and willing to respond.
- Working on our listening skills.
- Closing our reflections with a smudge or other ceremony.

During an internship I completed in Guatemala in 2006-2007, our team continually held reflections to be able to process the heavy information we learned about the genocide and on-going oppression that is occurring within the Maya traditional territories. This process was extremely helpful in many ways including: releasing the tension from the day or week, being able to cry and be angry with people who were also feeling the same things, looking deeper into some of the issues and how they connect us to all humanity, making comparisons and contrasts to our lives, understanding the role of colonization, brainstorming ideas on actions we can take, having the chance to discuss any issues that came up within the group, and feeling safe to express your ideas and emotions with others. The reflection process then, can be a necessary part of healing, decolonization, mobilization, and transformation.

The reflection process is not the end of the process but a part of a cycle. Like we can't research for the sake of knowledge creation, we cannot reflect on our actions solely for the purpose of understanding. With the new knowledge we must continually be seeking new knowledge, new insights, and discovering new methods of praxis for us actively engage and transform our futures.

Our Organization

The resurgence of Wet'suwet'en peoples on our lands is something that will inevitably take place on many fronts and in many ways. The purpose of the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* then is to create a legal entity that is currently required for our people to be able to develop and seek funding for Resurgence Projects in the Wet'suwet'en territory. This association will give our people the opportunity to network with each other, to work towards common goals, and to access funding to get the projects we want to see in our territories off the ground. Furthermore, it will enable our people to do the projects that are meaningful to us rather than having to keep our activities in the realm of volunteerism while having to continue working for "The Man".

Organizational Structure

Ideally, the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* could be an independent organization that does not seek any kind of recognition from the Canadian State. Unfortunately, the only way this organization would be able to succeed would be if we had our own money or a private funder willing to provide us with the financial resources to quit our day jobs and focus on resurgence. Since, we don't have either of these two options, we must follow the typical processes of establishing ourselves as a non-profit organization. Registering, will give us a number of advantages to get the Resurgence Alliance up and running. First of all, most funding organizations require recipients of research grants and education dollars to be a registered legal entity. This ensures that the organization is transparent and accountable for the funds that they receive as well as open about their goals and methods. Members of the Alliance will also rest easy knowing that they are not personally responsible for any financial and legal matters. As the Alliance is established, members will have to decide whether or not they wish to be registered as a charity. Becoming a charity will require the Alliance to decide if they wish to be restricted by some rules including agreeing to remain apolitical and not to protest any levels of government.

To become a non-profit society, the applicant must create a name, establish a founding Board of Directors of at least five individuals, provide a mailing address, outline the purposes of the society, create or adopt the by-laws of the society act, and develop a constitution. A majority of this information is outlined in this proposal. In this section, the structure of the organization, such as the financial and administrative details provide a more comprehensive view of how the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* will be established and operated.

Board of Directors:

The Founding Board of Directors will consist of interested individuals from the Wet'suwet'en community who are dedicated to a resurgence of Wet'suwet'en peoples and committed to the goals and methods of the alliance. Typically, a board will consist of members who take on roles such as, president, vice-president, treasurer, and secretary. For our purposes, to start our organizational structure off on the right foot our board structure will be non-hierarchical and will instead be focused on the methodology that the centre has adopted. As a 'collective board' members will take on a portfolio (research, education, action, and reflection) and will share equally in decision-making. As we will not begin with the resources to hire staff, our board will serve as a 'working governing board' and will be responsible for the governance of the organization as well as the day-to-day operations. The board will be responsible for finalizing the constitution and other details of the organization; fundraising; and working to establish the nealliancetwork. After the organization is established, it is hoped that the founding directors can be replaced with a Board of Director's representing a member from each of the five Wet'suwet'en clans and that a separation between board and staff and 'affiliates' will be clearly defined.

Staff:

The permanent staff that will be required will reflect the non-hierarchical roles of the Board. Rather than having workers who range from the typical Executive Director to the Receptionist, we will have individuals who share in the workload and celebrate their talents and skills. Our duties will include: searching for project ideas, writing proposals, maintaining our books and the requirements of being a society, filing, and fulfilling the roles of our projects. We will also be able to hire project based, casual employees fulfilling many roles including: researchers, educators, translators, linguists, language teachers, traditional knowledge holders, and other individuals involved in each project that will become a part of the overall team that builds and develops each project. To ensure this organizational design works, team building and team meetings will be at the forefront as we establish our work plans. The reflection process outlined above can also help us ensure that the work is being done, people are feeling overloaded or left out, and that we are continually working to strengthen our organization. Any issues we cannot resolve will likely go to the board who will have to develop a dispute resolution process and provide guidance and support.

Affiliated Members:

The *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* will be able to support the work of individuals and organizations that wish to do projects through the alliance. This will give our people the opportunity to apply for funding and establish partnerships through our registered non-profit society. To become an affiliated member, individuals and organizations may apply to the Board of Directors. Official documents will be developed that include contracts for affiliates to sign that outline: a commitment to the mission, vision, goals, and methodology. They will also be given a sample project development guide to ensure that projects/partnerships remain consistent and fulfill all the requirements outlined by the board for reporting, communication, and other administrative purposes. Affiliates will be required to submit their CV and ensure that it is updated as it changes for posting on our website, attend our Annual General Meeting, and commit to seeking project funding and developing a Resurgence project at least once a year if they do not have a current project.

Having a strong vision is huge. Having a core of people who can work with you in the dark moments. But knowing that it took a long, long time to get here. That is another thing that Elders have said. You know it took us a long time to get here and it's going to take us a long time to get out. In other words, that healing doesn't happen when someone goes out and spends two beautiful weeks on the land when there has been generations of colonization. There is no problem with lofty ideals. But knowing that the journey is one step at a time and sometimes there is resistance and sometimes it doesn't go the way we think. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. But having that core that you can trust is essential because it is lonely enough as it is sometimes (Ross Hoffman, personal communication, September 27, 2010).

Project Development:

Prior to seeking funding or developing a project, affiliates will be required to submit an “expression of interest” to the Board. A standardized form will be developed including: Project description, proposed budget, funding details and proposal deadlines, and a description of how the project will meet our goals, resurgence methodology, and language requirements. Upon review of the Expression of Interest the board will decide whether the Alliance will support the project or not.

If a project is supported by the Alliance, the affiliate will be required to submit a draft proposal before it is sent to the funding agency/individual. All proposals will be required to submit a standard percentage of the proposal dollars for administration and space rental if applicable¹. Upon review of the proposal, the Board will submit a letter to include with the proposal that outlines the support of the Alliance for the project and provides an overview of the our mandate.

Once the project receives a response regarding the proposal, the affiliate will be required to inform the Board of the success/failure of the proposal. If the project is approved, the Alliance will receive and administer funds and manage the project (making sure goals/deliverables/reporting requirements are met) and provide overall support for the project. If it is a large project with a large budget, the proposal may require funding for an additional staff member (to manage the project), which should be included in the initial budget. If other employees are required, such as community research assistants, educators, and activists, translators, language teachers, traditional knowledge holders, linguists etc. a hiring committee consisting of the staff project manager and the affiliate will hire individuals as casual employees who will be paid according to the proposal guidelines set by the members of the Alliance. A wage scale will be provided to ensure consistency between projects.

As the organization progresses, guidelines will be developed for our projects and for the community in general that guide the Resurgence Methodology process. For example, we may develop indicators in each of the sections: research, education, action, and reflection to help us integrate the four components and make sure we are developing the projects to the best of our ability. Furthermore, by monitoring the process (i.e. reflection) as it unfolds throughout the various projects, we will be able to develop a best—and worst—practices to help future projects. Other areas we can make guidelines is in meeting our goals, addressing our values, and monitoring the application of the projects in the community after the official project has ended.

¹ This is assuming that in the future the WRN will have official office space.

Administrative and Financial Details

Budget. Initially, the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance* will be established by individuals willing to work for huckleberries (i.e. as volunteers). However, it is hoped that our organization will flourish and we will soon be able to have office space and hire staff. Below is a rough estimate of the costs it may take to establish us as a forceful, physical entity.

Item	Description	Start-Up	Future (Yearly)
Office Rental	Initially, our space will be out of our homes or off the side of our desks. However, it is hoped that eventually we will get office space.	In-kind	\$6000
Utilities	Including hydro, telephone, Internet, etc.	In-kind	3,600
Staff	Funding will be distributed equally among staff members to compensate them for their hard work, funding may fluctuate year by year.	Huckleberries	100,000
Materials and Supplies	Including print cartridges, voice recorders, paper, pens, workshop materials, etc.	In-kind	12,000
Computer Equipment	5 computers/laptops	In-kind	12,500
Publishing Equipment	Printer, Photocopier, Fax	In-kind	2,000
Website Development	In-Kind	In-kind	In-kind
Promotional Materials/Newsletter	In-House	In-kind	In-kind
Office Furniture & Equipment	Used: Desks, filing cabinets, tables, chairs, telephones, etc.	In-kind	5,000
TOTAL YEAR ONE		10 gallons of HB	\$141,100

Possible Sources of Funding. Another purpose of the Alliance is to enable our communities to access funding and employment that isn't reliant on the exploitation of our natural resources. While it is realized that no money is clean money, the danger that our communities are currently facing, to address the poverty of our people and our nations, is to make deals with industry. The current consultation and accommodate framework does not give us the right to free, prior, and informed consent. It rarely if ever

gives us the ability to say “no” and despite our lands being free of a treaty, our lands, air, and water are currently being commodified at a disgusting rate. We must ensure that corporations that are seeking to “buy” our compliance with their activities in the territory are not funding our projects. Furthermore, we must also look to see where the funding from our proposals are coming from and that there funding is similarly not linked to companies like Enbridge who are trying to demonstrate their “goodwill” in the community. To keep our work closer to our end goals of being freed from the neo-liberal regime, it is important that the Alliance be developed as a true grassroots organization. Therefore, it is crucial that it starts off small, rather than trying to fund a big, fancy research centre with all the bells and whistles. The physical location will only require a small space to house our office equipment while the majority of the projects will occur in the field. As such, funding will not be focused on the administration of the organization rather, on the projects themselves. The time devoted to the development of this proposal will also help the Board of Director’s to be able to quickly launch the organization and begin seeking funding. There will be two types of funding that the Alliance needs to find: core administrative funding and project based funding.

The core funding required is outlined in the budget above. Possible sources of funding include: government and private funding in the areas of culture, health, environment, education, language, and non-profit management. An example of funding opportunities include:

- The Centre for Sustainability
- Canada Cultural Spaces Fund
- Sustainability Network
- Endswell Foundation
- Tides Canada

The project funding will be acquired through government, private sources, and other non-profit organizations. Funding could be in the form of research or program grants, or through general fundraising to start our own projects, no strings attached. An example of funding opportunities include:

Community

- Band Offices
- Office of Wet’suwet’en
- Burns Lake Native Development Corporation
- Bulkley Valley Community Foundation

Federal and Provincial Agencies

- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Cultural Heritage
- Ministry of Tourism and Parks
- Ministry of Environment
- Health Canada
- Indian and Northern Affairs Canada
- First Peoples’ Heritage and Language Council

- National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation
- National and Provincial Association of Friendship Centres
- Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council
- Canadian Institute of Health Research
- Institute of Aboriginal Peoples' Health

Education Institutions

- Colleges and Universities
- School District
- Public Policy Institutes/ Think tanks

Private/Non-Profit

- The Indigenous Environmental Network
- Honour the Earth
- Friends of Wild Salmon
- The Sierra Club
- Green Peace
- EcoTrust Canada
- Amnesty International
- Defending Mother Earth
- David Suzuki Foundation

Some projects won't even need funding, and I'm sure we will realize this is the case more and more as we become more attuned to developing resurgence-based projects in our community. Other methods to build capacity within the Alliance is to rely on volunteers and to investigate opportunities for local, sustainable economic activities such as selling crafts, catering, guiding, natural building, sharing knowledge, and participating in the local and traditional markets.

Timeframe

The development of this proposal is to enable the people who wish to become involved a running start to get the organization realized. However, there is a lot of work to be done. The Board needs to be developed and policies and procedures need to be put in place; by-laws need to be drafted and finalized; project development guidelines need to be drafted and adopted by the board; and the fundraising campaign must be initiated. Hopefully, this can be done over the course of a few months and once the Alliance is established as a non-profit society we will have the ability to being applying for proposals to bring some cool projects into the community. Depending on the terms of the proposals, projects can range from a one-time event to a multi-year project. Really, the timeframe to get the Resurgence Alliance off of paper and into the community depends on the commitment of the founding board to devoting time and energy into its development.

Location

The location for this project was one of my initial questions going into my community governance project. Initially, I had envisioned a research centre, perhaps built from natural building techniques and included workshop space and outdoor workstations such as smokehouses and medicine gardens. Determining a physical location for this however, was a very contentious and very political issue. Concerns about which clan's territory this would be on, how close to Burns Lake or Smithers it would be, whether it would be on-reserve or off-reserve, and whether we would seek permits for building, and so on. Through my conversations, a majority of the people I spoke to felt like it should definitely not focus on being on a reserve and that it should serve all Wet'suwet'en people and all Wet'suwet'en clans. Since I've been home, I have travelled between Burns Lake and Smithers, a two-hour drive, at least fifteen times. I have witnessed meetings being held at one end of the territory or another and unless there was a travel budget, community members were not able to attend meetings that were held

I fully agree with your statement that it should be intrinsic, it should be everywhere, not just in one central unit, especially in an urban unit. It shouldn't be urbanized. We are at risk of further institutionalizing our cultural knowledge to the point where we are relying on institutions rather than our cultural selves. Our institution is the feast hall. The bahlats is not just indoors. The traditional bahlats was always indoors and it has become colonized and we are sitting indoors on chairs rather than outside on blankets.

Mel Basil, Gitxsan (Lax Gibuu) and Wet'suwet'en (Gitdumden) (personal communication, July 27, 2010).

on opposite ends of the territory. Meeting in the middle poses the same issues about transportation and accessibility. As I struggled with this dilemma it seemed logical to completely decentralize the centre and build an Alliance where projects are based throughout the territory, in the various communities, and in existing physical spaces. Rather than our participants having to come to us, we will go to them! Also, we can provide for opportunities for our people to experience the entirety of our territories rather than sticking to one place. To ensure we are always following traditional protocol, we will have to make sure the chiefs whose territory we seek to implement our activities upon approve of our use and activities on the land. My dream of building something out on the territory can still become a reality, however, it will reside in the realm of an individual project rather than encompass the entire headquarters for the centre.

Also, as time on the project went on, I realized that we would still need to eventually set up some office space somewhere. I imagine this will be in one of the larger communities, Burns Lake, Houston, Smithers, or on one of the reserves. Hopefully, we can find some really great space that is cheap or even free and perhaps we

may find that it is best to keep this space decentralized as well and continue working from our homes to be closer to our families. Another option worth looking into in the future is to develop a commune, off the grid, on the territory and house our work from that location!

Awit Za (That is All)

Through this proposal I hope to have outlined the details necessary to launch the *Yinka Dini Resurgence Alliance*. Upon returning home to my community, I am able to see the devastation of our forests from the logging industry and to hear the fear in peoples' voices when we discuss pipeline developments along our rivers. The urgency for us to take action and reclaim our voice as *Yinka Dini* has never been stronger. I see so many of our people who know what we want, but we need to come together, to put our heads together, and refocus our energy on the resurgence of all aspects of what it means to be *Yinka Dini*. *Awit Za!*

References

- Alfred, Taiaiake. 1999. *Peace, Power, Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto*. Don Mills: Oxford University Press.
- Alfred, Taiaiake. 2005. *Wasase: Indigenous Pathways of Action and Freedom*. Peterborough: Broadview Press.
- Alfred, Taiaiake and Jeff Corntassel. 2005. "Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism" in *The Politics of Identity*. Edited by Richard Bellamy. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Boud, D. et al. 1985 *Reflection: Turning Experience into Learning*. London: Kogan.
- Corntassel, Jeff. 2008. "Toward Sustainable Self-Determination: Rethinking the Contemporary Indigenous-Rights Discourse" *Alternatives* 33(1): 105-132.
- Crate, Susan A. 2006. "Elder Knowledge and Sustainable Livelihoods in Post-Soviet Russia: Finding Dialogue across the Generations." *Arctic Anthropology* 43(1): 40-51.
- Deloria, Vine, Jr. 1995. *Red Earth White Lies: Native Americans and the Myth of Scientific Fact*. New York: Scribner.
- Friere, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Continuum, New York.
- Glavin, Terry. 1990. *A Death Feast in Dimlahamid*. Vancouver: New Star Books.
- LaDuke, Winona. 1999. *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Mills, Antonia. 2005. *Hang Onto These Words: Johnny David's Delgamuukw Evidence*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Shiva, Vandana. 2005. *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press.
- Wildcat, Daniel R. and Vine Deloria, Jr. 2001. *Power and Place: Indian Education in America*. Colorado: Fulcrum Resources.
- Waziyatawin. Forthcoming. "Indigenous Survival in the Coming Collapse" *For Indigenous Minds Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. Edited by Waziyatawin and Michael Yellow Bird.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. 1999. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. University of Otago Press, Dunedin: New Zealand.

Yellow Bird, Michael. 2005. "Tribal Critical Thinking Centres" *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*. Edited by Waziyatawin Angela Wilson and Michael Yellow Bird. Santa Fe, School of American Research Press.