Ground truthing:
An exploration of Ancestral Governance in Nuxalk homelands

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Abstract

This thesis explores how Indigenous governance, as specific to Nuxalk, is important to Canada's understanding of historic land dispossession, reconciliation, and community development. The study demonstrates how Nuxalk governance is inseparable from Nuxalk homelands, how governance supports Nuxalkmc's rights and responsibilities related to their homelands and explores whether or not Nuxalk land governance is supported, broadly speaking, by specific goals in the Province of British Columbia's Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan. Most importantly, the research will help to illuminate how Nuxalk governance is applicable, functioning, and practiced by Nuxalk people today.

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Glossary of Nuxalk Words

Alhkw'ntam – Creator (name used in smayusta/history)
Alkw – herald, one who speaks on behalf of the Staltmc.
Apcwaakm – "uplifting of the babies" – ceremony marking the first year of life.
Apsulh – village.
Asulikts – the source of Nuxalk law, what came down.
Lhlm – potlatch.
Klhalhta – practice – where Nuxalk law gathers its strength.
Ksnmsta – the source of wealth that one pulls from the land.
Kw'alhtnta – purpose – what Nuxalk law means for the Nation today.
Nunuts'xlhuusnmak – the Ancestral Governance Handbook (based on the root word
Nunuts'xlhuusnm – a governing council).
Nusq'lst – an ancestral village site.
Nusq'lstmc – having to do with people of Nusq'lst.
Nuxalk – having to do with the people of the Bella Coola Valley. Also refers to the Nuxalk Nation and the coming together of the territories.
Nuxalkmc – citizen of the Nuxalk Nation.
Nuxalk – the area of Nuxalk – also known as the Bella Coola Valley
Nuyayanlh– to clear the path
Putl'lt - those not yet born.
Sast – to return to one's home, to go home.
Sisawk – Council of the Stataltmc.
Slhiixw - treasures associated with a family's first ancestors.
Smayusta - origin story – where Nuxalk law comes from.
Snx – the Sun.
Staltmc – leader of a household and leader within the Sisawk Society.
Stl'mstaliwa - the full human experience.
Stl'cw – ethics.
Stutwiniitscw – thank you (singular)
Stutwiintscwtsap – thank you (plural)
Sxayaxw – protocols.
Su7ulm – the right to manage and take resources from the Ksnmsta.
Tatau (Tataw) – Creator (name used in prayer).
Tcamatlhh - location – how Nuxalk law is validated and reinforced.
Ts'ktalclayc – Coming of Age Ceremony.
Usqalits'txw - smallpox genocide of 1862 – 63.
Way – the Nuxalk way to signal that one is finished speaking.

Source: (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document).

Dedication:

This is work is dedicated completely and unequivocally to my research collaborators:

Skw’asmana (Iris Siwallace), Dr. Snxakila (Clyde Tallio), Suuncwakila (Jacob Gascoyne) Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack), Qwaxw (Spencer Siwallace) and Sp’alulhana (Carrigan Tallio).

Stutwiintscwtsap (thank you) for your trust, your dedication, your humour, your knowledge, and your brilliant minds. You made this journey fun, insightful, and full of hope and laughter. You all make the dark days shine bright. This community is so fortunate to have you.

Stutwiintscwtsap to Nicole Kaechele and Rachelle Beveridge. You two were always there to support, to guide, and to listen. You two are pretty awesome humans.

Preface:

Throughout this paper there are numerous references to Nuxalk “ancestral governance,” “law,” and “governance. These terms can be used interchangeably, but efforts have been made to use the term “Nuxalk governance” to encompass all three.

Language is important, and, whenever possible, Nuxalk words are used in place of English for concepts that are important to Nuxalk governance. These include concepts for which there are not always suitable English translations or equivalents (which is often) such as place names, people’s names, and other important designations. In most instances, “Bella Coola” is referred to by its proper name of Nuxalk.

The document alternates between the use of “we” and the use of “I.” This reflects where the research was done primarily individually and where it was done collaboratively by the research group. In the case where I am referring to “we” as a settler group, this is delineated by “we” (as in settlers).

Most importantly, this research study was done in collaboration with six citizens of the Nuxalk Nation, all of whom have extensive background knowledge and experience in the revival and application of Nuxalk governance. However, the research findings here do not represent the “Nuxalk Nation” in its entirety, its leadership - elected or hereditary - or the general community, and they should not be interpreted as such.

Chapter 1:

1.1 Nuxalk Autonomy
~ Sovereignty and Governance

The Nuxalk Nation, an Indigenous nation residing in their homelands of Nuxalk – also known as Bella Coola – on what is now referred to as the Central Coast of British Columbia, Canada, have never ceded authority over their homelands and they have never given consent for their lands to be governed by any other nation or outside agency. Like many Indigenous nations across the world, Nuxalkmc have always maintained that they are a sovereign nation.

"As the Nuxalk Nation, we have the sovereign right to jurisdictional rule within our own territory. Our lands are a sacred gift. The land is provided for the continued use, benefit and enjoyment of our people, the Nuxalkmc, and it is our ultimate obligation to Tatau, the Creator, to care for and protect it (House of Smayusta (1995) in Mack, 2006, p. 21)."

Nuxalkmc have always had, and continue to have, an active system of governance that does not require any validation from any other source. The authority for Nuxalk governance comes directly from the Creator at the beginning of time and is referred to as its own entity – Asulikts – what came down, or "the source" (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document). This system has served to govern Nuxalk life and society since time began, resulting in a sovereign Nation with its own set of ethics and protocols that continue to guide and shape daily life. Nuxalk governance is understood as its own entity, containing all the faculties necessary for self-governance and autonomy. It is from the foundation of Nuxalk sovereignty that we – the research collaborators – undertook this research study.

1.2 Pre-emptions, Land Policies, and Dispossession
~ A Short History of Stolen Land in Nuxalk

Nuxalk sovereignty exists, it has always existed, and it will continue to exist. In Canada, Crown sovereignty, as exercised through the Doctrine of Discovery, is also assumed to exist, and it is through this assumed sovereignty that Canada alienated land from Indigenous peoples, even those who did not sign treaties with the Crown (Yellowhead Institute, 2019, p.17). The story of land alienation, denial of Indigenous jurisdiction, and dispossession of land has been built into Crown-Indigenous relationships through decades of policy and legal exercises (Yellowhead Institute, 2019, p.17), and what happened in Nuxalk (Bella Coola) follows much of the same narrative.

"I want to tell you about this business which we have been engaged in a long time. The question of lands."
(Albert King, Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913).

On August 16, 1913, Nuxalkmc Albert King spoke with the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs, also known as the McKenna-McBride Commission. The Commission was not intended to address the question of Indigenous land "title;" rather, it was to investigate and adjust the size of Indian reserves in B.C. (Harris, 2002, p. 229). However, as Albert's transcript indicates, he and others immediately question the Crown's assumed authority to alienate them from their land, and state that the land has been taken without compensation or consent and express their frustration with the unwillingness of the Commission to respond to their concerns (Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913, p. 9-13).

Although this conversation happened 111 years ago, it is still very much alive today. Albert and others were expressing their opposition to the application of colonial land policies that were not, and are not, recognized by Nuxalk as having any rightful jurisdiction in their homelands. The impact of these policies, and the accompanying conversations about land, authority, and jurisdiction, continue to this day.

By the late 1800s, Nuxalk people saw much of their land stolen through the application of colonial land policies, most notably pre-emptions, that were designed to facilitate dispossession (Yellowhead, 2019, p. 16). Here in Nuxalk, the beginnings of this particular land theft happened on October 25, 1894, when a group of Norwegian settlers from Minnesota were offered deeds to 160 acres each in the "Bella Coola Valley" by the Minister of Immigration utilizing B.C.'s pre-emption policy (Bella Coola Museum, Norwegian Settlement, 2021). To obtain the deed, they had to fulfill the pre-emption policies of the day, which entailed clearing the land, building a house, and improving the property (Bella Coola Museum, Norwegian Settlement, 2021, BC Archives Research Guide, 2012).

Pre-emptions were a colonial policy intended to encourage settlement and agriculture on plots of "unoccupied, unreserved, and unsurveyed Crown Land in British Columbia" (Indian Claims Commission, Williams Lake Indian Band Village Site Inquiry, 2006, p. 20), and they were granted throughout British Columbia from the 1860s until they were terminated by the 1970 Land Act. Once the conditions of the pre-emption were met, the land was surveyed and a Crown grant was issued, transferring ownership to the pre-emptor for a discount rate or no further charge (BC Archives Research Guide, 2012). Pre-emptions were not to be offered in areas where there was "Indian settlements" and land that was "recently used," and policies in 1862 dictated that up to 300 acres surrounding the villages were to be set aside. In 1877, Indian Commissioner Gilbert Sproat even claimed that it was illegal to purchase or pre-empt an "Indian settlement." (p. 22, Indian Claims Commission, Williams Lake Indian Band Village Site Inquiry, 2006). Initially,

Governor James Douglas allowed Indigenous people to obtain pre-emptions, albeit under extremely challenging circumstances (Harris, 2002, p. 36). Douglas's policy was terminated in 1866, and Indigenous people were effectively barred from pre-emptions unless they appealed directly to the government to do so. However, the process was complicated, and pre-emptions required capital and resources such as farming equipment and livestock. Acquiring a pre-emption was again intentionally made more difficult for Indigenous people, therefore it occurred in very few circumstances (Harris, p. 68 & 87, 2002).

Under the leadership of the Reverend Christian Saugstad, whose intent was to establish a "utopian community" at Bella Coola, each Norwegian settler would get a 160-acre pre-emption, for a fee of $1, and the Crown would transfer the title to the land when it was improved to the value of $5 per acre. Each family had to have $300 in cash, and as soon as 30 members had built houses on their land, a wagon road would be constructed through the colony (Fish, 1982). Approximately 80 Norwegian settlers arrived in Bella Coola on October 30, 1894, on the steamship Princess Louise, and the story goes that they drew names out of a hat to determine which 160 acres they would receive. As the land was unsurveyed and spread throughout the Valley, the original pre-emptions were swapped between families as they sorted out who was entitled to the best plots of most arable land, with the bachelor's often receiving the least desirable locations (P. Solhjell, personal communication, June 30, 2023).

As the Norwegians were building a new life, Nuxalk people were trying to save theirs, grappling with the effects of the Usqalits'txw - smallpox genocide - of 1862-63. The Usqalits'txw reduced the Nuxalk population from at least 30,000 people throughout 18,000 square kilometres of their homeland - which included Nuxalk (Bella Coola Valley), Talyuumc (South Bentinck), Kw'alhnamc (Kwatna) and Ista-Suthlhmc (Lower Dean, King Island, Dean and Kimsquit Rivers) - to approximately 300 survivors of their ancestral villages, many of whom were now living collectively at Q'umk'uts, colonially known as the Bella Coola Townsite (Snxakila, personal communication, 2023).

Despite suffering a near genocide of their nation due to smallpox, Nuxalk people were the first to welcome the Norwegian settlers off the Princess Louise, meeting them in the harbour and ferrying both their persons and their goods onto land and upriver to their colonies. The Norwegians sorely lacked the skills required to pole upriver in the shallow spoon canoes the Nuxalk so expertly piloted, and life certainly would have been much harder for these first settlers were it not for the Nuxalk's generosity (Bella Coola Museum, Norwegian Settlement, 2021).

By June 1895, approximately six months after their arrival, the Norwegians saw their population grow to 125 people – close to half of the remaining Nuxalk survivors. By the end of that same year, they had built 40 homes and cabins, constructed 16 bridges and 10 miles of trail, and started a school with the teacher being Iver Fougner, who was later to become the Bella Coola

Indian Agent. The government of the day had now spent a total of $20,000.97 on supporting the growth of the Bella Coola Colony (P. Solhjell, notes on the Norwegian Colony).

The policy of reserves, much like the policy of pre-emptions, was specially designed to dispossess Indigenous people from their land (Yellowhead, 2019). It was effective; by the early 1900s most of the Nuxalk population was living on-reserve, mostly within the boundaries of their "main" reserve, Bella Coola Indian Reserve 1 (IR1), which includes the ancestral villages of Q'umk'uts and Snxlhh.

The village of Q'umk'uts (photo supplied by Snxakila)

Created in 1882, IR1 consists of 1356.5 hectares, which is approximately 13.5 square kilometres, and is one of seven reserves Nuxalk have throughout their homelands, for a total of just 20 square kilometres.[1] In comparison, Norwegian settlers were awarded, through a combination of pre-emptions and Crown grants, over 1624 hectares from the 1880s through to 1930 (Thompson, 2023, Crown Grants).

Fast forward to present day and, according to Statistics Canada (2021), the Nuxalk population living on reserve (i.e. "registered Indians," noting this does not include all persons with ancestral ties) has tripled to 937 people, meaning the majority of people on reserve are still living on the

[1] From Reserves/Settlements/Villages – Nuxalk Nation (2024) www. fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca

same amount of land as 1882. In contrast, the settler population of the Valley has also increased; approximately 10 times since the original Norwegians arrived and now sits at 1226. The approximate area of land within the Central Coast Regional District, the CCRD (established in 1968 by the Province of British Columbia) in the Bella Coola Valley totals 4,475 square kilometres. [2] While Nuxalk do continue to exercise many of their traditional rights and responsibilities associated with their homelands, at no time were Nuxalk people offered 160 acres each, and none of the land outside of the reserve is governed under exclusive Nuxalk jurisdiction, but at present is a mix of Crown land, private property, and other colonial designations (Nuxalk Nation Stewardship Department, Bella Coola Land Parcels, 2022). Therefore, for the purposes of this paper it can be deduced that Nuxalk are not accessing or managing the entirety of their homelands as they traditionally would have, and therefore it cannot offer them the same benefits as it would have pre-contact.

1.3 The Legacy of Stolen Land in Nuxalk ~ The Ongoing Effects of Land Inequality

Nuxalk's situation is just one example of a nation-wide problem. The concept of land in Canada is built upon the British notion that only the Crown could "own" land, and, given that there was a "void" of law in the British colonies, this was the only concept that mattered. Today, approximately 89 percent of the land in Canada is divided between federal and provincial governments. 94 percent of the land in B.C. is claimed as "Crown" land, and just 0.2 percent is comprised of federally held Indian reserves (Yellowhead Institute, p. 24, 2019). The detrimental social, economic, and health impacts on Canada's Indigenous peoples have been widely documented and directly linked to the theft of their land and, subsequently, the continued attempts to eradicate of their way of life (Alfred, 2005, Manuel, 2015, Yellowhead Institute, 2019). The late Secwepemc scholar and activist Arthur Manuel (2015) linked lack of land directly to poverty in Indigenous communities, noting that, "With this distribution of land, you don't have to have a doctorate of economics to understand who will be poor and who will be rich. And our poverty is crushing" (p.8).

From the standpoint of the current capitalist economy, we know that access to land is powerful; it provides economic opportunity, livelihood, and sustenance. People who own land and property have advantages; they can acquire more money by leveraging their assets for borrowing power, allowing them to purchase goods and services they need or want or invest into business ventures and they can buy and sell their privately owned homes and acreages. As people living on reserves cannot "own" their land none of this applies to them, and this alone illustrates a massive inequality as they are effectively shut out of one of the biggest transactions in our capitalist economy: buying and selling real estate. From a Nuxalk perspective, being forced onto reserves

[2] From Central Coast Regional District (2024): https://www.ccrd.ca/governance/electoral-areas

has had lasting effects on their abilities to participate both in their traditional economy, through place-based practices and transactions that existed for millennia, as demonstrated by the Nuxalk testimonies at the Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia in 1913, and also the broader, Canadian economy, which scholar Arthur Manuel (2015, p. 135) ties directly to the lack of land under Indigenous jurisdiction.

For Nuxalk, access to land is fundamental for the revitalization of their culture, governance, and traditional family systems. 130 years since the first pre-emptions, the vast majority of land in the "Bella Coola Valley" still "belongs" to private landowners and the Crown. Nuxalk people have not acquired any further reserve lands, nor have they obtained any additional land through treaty, litigation, or reconciliation. The population density on-reserve is 61.6 people per square kilometre; off-reserve it is approximately 0.23 people per square kilometre,[3] and the median income on-reserve at Bella Coola Indian Reserve 1[4] after tax in 2020 was $21,200. Compare this to the settler community, Central Coast Area D, where the median income was almost double at $38,800 (Statistics Canada, 2021). While the effects of land dispossession are complex, coupled with the systemic racism Indigenous people face in settler society and the harmful effects of residential schools, it is little wonder that 25 percent of Indigenous people experience poverty in Canada (Wein, 2013). Separated by nothing more than a few hundred metres of land, the example in Nuxalk portrays the stark inequalities that have grown between the two communities since the establishment of the first Hudson's Bay trading post in 1869.

1.4 Thesis Objectives, Scope, and Research Questions

As detailed in the upcoming section 1.9 – Nuxalk Land Governance – An Active Responsibility – we understand that the responsibility to govern land is a central principle of the Nuxalk governance system and cannot be treated as a separate component. In Nuxalk governance, ancestral names validate the rights to certain homelands and establish who is responsible for governing them under the families smayusta (origin story). To effectively practice Nuxalk governance one must also have governance over the land as affirmed by their ancestral name and their accompanying smayusta. Through the smayusta, each Nuxalkmc living in a certain area would have su7ulm – the right to use the lands and waters and the responsibilities to care for them for future generations (Snxakila, personal communication, 2023).

In 2019, the Province of British Columbia (B.C.) introduced Bill 41, the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act, (DRIPA) which is intended to harmonize provincial laws with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP, 2007). In 2022,

[3] From CCRD (2024) www.ccrd.ca/governance/electoral-areas

[4] Bella Coola Indian Reserve 1 (NO. 07879) is located at COAST DISTRICT, RGE 3, AT MOUTH OF THE BELLA COOLA RIVER EAST END OF NORTH BENTINCK ARM OF BURKE CHANNEL (Source: Government of Canada First Nations Profiles, https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Search/FNReserves.aspx?BAND_NUMBER=539&lang=eng)

the government introduced the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA) Action Plan. The Action Plan (2022) details how the Province intends to advance reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through its incorporation of UNDRIP in B.C. laws and says that it will do so "in consultation and cooperation with Indigenous Peoples." (p. 1). The DRIPA Action Plan is informed by the understanding that it is "legally plural," recognizing that "within Canada there are multiple legal orders, including Indigenous laws and legal orders with distinct roles, responsibilities and authorities" (p. 6). But what does this look like in practice? Indigenous law has gained a prominent role in our attempts to practice reconciliation, and many scholars are pointing out that it needs to be recognized and applied with "equal weight" to our colonial legal systems for meaningful reconciliation to take place (Borrows, 2002).

In accordance with the understanding that Nuxalk governance requires the land from which the governance practices originate, the objective of this study is to understand if the principles and application of Nuxalk Ancestral Governance and the goals of the Province under the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act Action Plan can support one another and/or are compatible, especially in regard to land governance. The DRIPA Action Plan contains four Themes and Goals, but this study will only focus on two. The study considers both the "legal pluralism" and the "distinctions-based approach" of the DRIPA Action Plan with an examination of how the application of Nuxalk governance relates to the following two themes and their associated goals:

Theme 1. Self-Determination and Inherent Right to Self-Government.
(Goal: Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government, including developing, maintaining and implementing their own institutions, laws, governing bodies, and political, economic and social structures related to Indigenous communities) (p.10)

Theme 2. Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples
(Goal: Indigenous Peoples exercise and full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C.) (p.14)

The study will utilize Nusq'lst Apsulh, an ancestral village site currently being rebuilt in Nuxalk homelands, as its primary point of analysis. Using Nusq'lst as an anchoring point for land governance will allow the study to stay within scope. The study will explore how Nusq'lst is applying the principles of Nuxalk governance in its intentions and development and will also consider how or if this process is applicable and compatible with the Province's goals under the DRIPA Action Plan, with a specific focus on the above two Themes and Goals. We have chosen Nusq'lst because it is happening now, in real time, and gives a concrete and meaningful illustration of how these processes can work on the ground. Based on the findings of the research

collaborators, the study will put forth recommendations on opportunities to continue to develop, support, and encourage governance internally, and how these developments can help inform relationships and conversations with organizations both within and outside of Nuxalk homelands.

1.5 Importance of the Study

This study will draw from existing literature rooted in the conceptual framework of grounded normativity (Coulthard and Simpson, 2016) and it will contribute to a better understanding of land, land repatriation, and reconciliation as it applies to community development, utilizing examples from the Nuxalk community. In a more general sense, it is hoped that those who absorb this information will develop a greater understanding of how land disparity in Indigenous/settler communities continues to contribute to the challenges these communities face in their community development (Hampton & DeMartini, 2017), and how these issues can be addressed through the reapplication of the Indigenous laws and the return of land governance to its original inhabitants.

Additionally, this study is an opportunity to gather experts in Nuxalk governance and begin to refine what the practice of governance looks like today, as the incorporation of governance into one's life is an essential component for Nuxalkmc to live their Stl'mstaliwa (the full human experience) (Snxakila, 2023). For the settler community, broadening our understanding of the places in which we live and the practices that stewarded these places for thousands of years is another step in a decolonizing journey that is so greatly required by our times: when Canadians are educated about the injustices that are being committed in their name, they can become allies and help to push for change (Manuel, 2015). Embedded in that process must be what Rosalind Hampton and Ashley DeMartini (2017) refer to as "critical land literacy;" the assertion that one must the understand the relationship to land as informed by Indigenous knowledge, particularly the knowledge of the place where one lives, and that it must be considered in the context of a critique of "ongoing settler-colonialism in Canada" (p. 245). If one is not doing this work of land education, one is not engaging in the deep learning required of decolonization, and reconciliation, no matter how one defines it, cannot truly be achieved. All of these findings are important for community development, as they will contribute to a deeper understanding of the place where one lives, which is essential to fostering those connections so needed to establish the trust and meaningful relationships true community development requires (Gilchrist, 2021).

1.6 Structure of Thesis

The structure of this thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter One introduces the context of the research, provides a glossary of Nuxalk words, details the problem statement, delivers a positionality statement, provides a comprehensive background and context of Nuxalk's relationship to land and situates the reader in the Nuxalk worldview, details the objectives, scope, and research question, and the importance of the study. Chapter Two introduces the conceptual framework of grounded normativity and details the accompanying literature review. Chapter Three addresses the methods, methodology, and data analysis, as well as the results and findings. Chapter Four articulates the findings of the research collaborators, and Chapter Five introduces the reader to Nusq'lst Apsulh, which is used to articulate the application of Nuxalk governance. Chapter Six addresses the research question, while Chapter Seven discusses the strategic implications of the work and provides recommendations, using Nuxalk governance as a lens throughout. Chapter Eight provides the conclusion of the work.

1.7 "My" property in Nuxalk
~ A Settler's Journey to Deeper Understanding

I am fortunate that my relationship to this community, both Nuxalkmc and settler, is deep and my relationship to this topic is even deeper. I have lived here for nearly 20 years, and during that time my views of land and property ownership, colonialism, and local history have evolved drastically and continue to do so.

The land on which I have come to "own" is one of the original pieces pre-empted in 1894. Every day I walk on "my" 44 acres of land, and I think about the thousands of Nuxalk people that came before me. How they looked at the exact same vistas, the mountains, the trees, how their feet touched the earth and how they related to the world around them. I think about how radically things have changed for them, and how many things have remained the same, such as connection to place, family lineages, and the importance of names and ancestral origins (Mack, 2006). I think about how I can no longer utter the words "my property," and how that, when people ask me about the land I live on, I start by telling them that it is one of the original stolen pieces. Sometimes people physically recoil from those words.

I think about how my family continues to benefit from that original pre-emption land transaction 130 years ago, because this is how colonial policies work, and, as a white settler, it has worked out very well for me. I have purchased acres and acres of land while my Nuxalk neighbours, just a few hundred feet away, are cramming 17 people into one home. I think about all of my Nuxalk friends and family, and I feel embarrassed about where I live and how I have benefited so greatly from their homelands while they have lost so much. I do not have all the answers on how to

approach this, and I feel great discomfort sitting with this large chunk of Nuxalk land that is not really mine.

I have learned that the Nuxalk name for this area is “Snuqaax,” which gets its name from the mountains and the creeks and the salmon berries that were harvested here. The people living here would manicure the land to ensure a good harvest of salmon berries and they had orchards all throughout this area, so they became known as “Snuqaaxulmc,” people of salmon berry town, and every year they would prepare a feast and invite the neighbours to come and feast on salmon berries and eulachon grease. This section of land was the exclusive harvesting zone of Snuqaaxulmc, and only they were allowed to harvest this area. They would protect this area, care for the area, they would ensure that the area produced this bounty, and they would distribute these goods to validate their rights to this land (Snxakila, personal communication, 2021)

I know that the family that settled this property in 1894 were the Pettersen’s and since that time it has remained under settler ownership and control (P. Solhjell, personal communication, 2023). By my rough calculations, I believe I am the fifth or sixth settler to possess this land. For the past 130 years constructed colonial control, nested in the laws of private property and individual ownership, has dominated the use of this land. Comparing this system to one that served thousands of people over 14,000 years, people who shared and cared for this land for their future generations, makes the differences feel even more staggering.

I am fortunate that my family and I have been adopted into the Nuxalk community by the family of Staltmc (Chief) Nanus (Mike Tallio) at a potlatch in 2010. I have a Nuxalk name, Ts’mayc, which translates as “truth teller,” and my husband and children also hold Nuxalk names. With this comes responsibilities; there is now a definitive understanding that as part of the family we uphold the House of Nanus. We have been accepted into this community and we have experienced the deep generosity, humour, humanness, and love that is uniquely Nuxalk. I know that my family and I are experiencing a life that few settlers get to experience, and I am grateful for it.

However, one cannot ignore the power dynamics that have shaped our colonial world, and it would be negligent to undertake this research without a careful examination of my own position in relation to the research collaborators, as there are always power dynamics that can influence the research process (Molesson, 2010, Muhammad, et. al., 2015). Being on this land is a constant reminder of the massive social injustice that I am a part of and that I have benefitted from, and if I am going to actually confront what this is truly about, then the lens must turn on myself (Potts and Brown, 2015). That means consistent and careful attention to how this research process is being carried out, what is being “studied” and why, and how I can be an anti-oppressive researcher that actually contributes to challenging dominant research processes as well as

outcomes (Potts and Brown, 2015). As a wise friend of mine once said, “how you do the work is the work.” (Kaechele, N. personal communication, 2022).

This includes confronting the fact that I am a white settler conducting this research. Even if I do this work utilizing Indigenous methodologies, I am not Indigenous, and therefore do I even have the right to this study with these methodologies? Kovach (2015) is frank in her assertion that anyone undertaking this type of research is expected to engage in anti-colonial work and should have a “deep, abiding respect for Indigenous knowledge systems and Indigenous experience” (p.57). This is something I take very seriously and have put a lot of thought into how my study was designed.

Given this unique context, reflexivity and subjectivity have remained at the forefront of this study, which is a continued examination of “what I know and how I have come to know it” (Hampton and DeMartini, 2017, p.6) It was essential that this research also engage Indigenous, and more precisely Nuxalk, methodologies, practices, and knowledge to support Nuxalk production and representation of knowledge in a contemporary context (Beveridge, 2021). This will be further explored in this Methodology section.

1.8 Land, Reconciliation, and Community Development in Nuxalk ~ Why Land Matters

It is well established that land repatriation is essential for Indigenous people to achieve self-determination and foster sustainable economic development (Corntassel and Bryce, 2012, Manuel, 2015), and it is crucial to achieving reconciliation between Indigenous people and settlers in Canada (OECD, 2020). In the field of community development, the term “community” emphasizes trust, local relationships, a force for “good,” and a network of supporting social interactions within the community (Gilchrist, 2021). Therefore, in order for a community to develop, there must be trust, meaningful local relationships, and the belief that people support and understand one another. Furthermore, the belief that successful community development is rooted in human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action demands that fundamental inequalities be addressed, which is consistent with the tenets of true reconciliation (Kenny, S., and Connors, P., 2017). The recognition that reconciliation is necessary to form a new relationship with Indigenous peoples is well accepted, but how to apply it in a local context is not clear to many and remains uncomfortable for most. Reconciliation has been a difficult concept to define, and indeed it cannot be categorized as a catchall. The goals of reconciliation, broadly understood, include “attempts to address historical wrongs suffered by Aboriginal peoples as a result of colonial imposition of sovereignty and develop a consensus for future” (Ritchie, 2013, p. 406).

Land has long been a part of the reconciliation conversation, and many scholars state that reconciliation cannot include anything less than repatriation of land, stating that empowerment through the likes of "self-government" and "economic agreements," have not led to lasting change (Alfred, 2009). Recent movements such as "Land Back," which is an assertion of unceded Indigenous jurisdiction, have highlighted how much work we as Canadian citizens must do if we want to achieve true reconciliation (Pasternak, 2017, Yellowhead Institute, 2019). In a community such as Bella Coola, the historical harms caused by land dispossession, which have resulted in the acute land disparity between the two communities, settler and Nuxalkmc, need to be understood, and real, tangible solutions that support reconciliation's goals for a "consensus for the future" need to be explored and strengthened. As Manuel (2015) noted, "Before you have community participation, you must have community education…At the same time we have to educate Canadians on our rights and our demands and seek allies there. This is also essential." (p.219). In Bella Coola, acknowledging the past harms caused by stolen land, educating one another, and working together towards a more equitable jurisdiction of land are consistent with the tenets of both genuine community development and reconciliation.

1.9 Nuxalk Land Governance ~ An Active Responsibility

In order to gain a fulsome understanding of the subject of land in Nuxalk, it is essential that we develop a general understanding of the Nuxalk worldview as it relates to land and governance. This is important because it illustrates the relationship Nuxalk had with the land pre-contact and continue to have with the land today and serves to negate the so-often referenced assumption that Indigenous people did not use the land "efficiently," and therefore this left it free for Europeans to take (Fisher, 1971 – 72). It is also critical to understand Nuxalk's position as a sovereign Nation and how their governance supports this position. Nuxalk sovereignty is eloquently described by Nuxalk scholar, Jacinda Mack in her 2006 master's thesis:

"Nuxalk Sovereignty is an active responsibility that intertwines our history, language, families, and connection to the land through complex and strict laws as related through our smayusta, songs, dances, and potlatches" (Mack, p. 21, 2006).

As an oral society, storytelling is how Nuxalkmc transmitted the knowledge necessary to ensure the next generation had the tools it needed to survive and grow; it was and continues to be an essential tool for understanding and interpreting Nuxalk life (Thomas, 2015). The authority for Nuxalk law stems directly from the Creator, Alhkw'ntam, at the beginning of time and is contained in Nuxalk smayusta. Smayusta are Nuxalk family origin stories, and they describe how Nuxalk's first ancestors came to earth at the beginning of time. There are dozens of smayusta belonging to separate families that tell the story of that particular families' attachment to their

original place, and they detail the names, responsibilities, and rights unique to that family (McIlwraith, 1948).

The work of the Nunuts'xlhuusnmak – Our Ancestral Governance Handbook – describes the foundation of the Nuxalk governance system as being contained in four slhiixw (treasures). These are:

Smayusta: Origins – Where Nuxalk law comes from.
Klhalhta: Practice – Where Nuxalk law gathers its strength.
Tcamatlhh: Location – How Nuxalk law is validated and reinforced.
Kw'alhtnta: Purpose – What Nuxalk law means for the Nation today.
(Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p.14 – 15).

Embodied in Nuxalk governance are the roles and responsibilities of individuals and community members contained in the slhiixw (treasures associated with a family's first ancestors, such as names, occupations, songs, and dances), stl'cw (ethics) and sxayaxw (protocols). Nuxalk governance is deep and complex, and to fully explore the entirety of this topic is not the purpose of this paper. That being stated, for the purposes of this research, we mainly focused on how governance is connected to land and stewardship.

Nuxalk worldviews are shaped by the places in which they live, formed out of a complex and intimate connection to their lands, waters, and supernatural beings. This is a key concept to comprehend because it reinforces the need to fully appreciate the place-based connections and the roles they play in people's lives. Building on this knowledge, we need to understand the importance of names, because within this governance system is embedded a complex organisation of ancestral names. Indeed, one might argue that everything originates and leads back to the ancestral names: it is the names that validate the rights to certain homelands and establish the parameters under which certain activities can take place, and who is responsible for them under the family's smayusta (McIlwraith, 1948). In a broad comparison with the Canadian system, it is similar to an individual and/or family unit, or any composition of a governing body, holding legal authority and jurisdiction - including the right to govern, make decisions, and manage the land and its resources - over the particular area that was attached to the name. Moreover, the name would communicate all of this information to those familiar with that name and its accompanying smayusta, transmitting essential political, socio-economic, cultural, and genealogical knowledge across generations (Mack, 2006).

The concepts of what we would classify as governance, authority, responsibility, and rights and title are contained in all four slhiixw of Nuxalk law. Slhiixw are always taken as an inseparable unit, as they are all connected, and it is not normally appropriate to individualize them. However, this section will deeply explore the concept of tcamatlhh (location), as we are closely examining

the place-based connections that are inherent in Nuxalk governance. Names connected to tcamatlhh give Nuxalk people the right to live on the land, earn a living from its resources, and the responsibility to care for it. To hold a name is to be lawfully and morally accountable to the area the name originates from, and vice versa, as the land also takes care of the people. The right to harvest from the land held with it a responsibility to also protect it for a future generation – this was called an individual's "su7ulm." (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document p.44). Within tcamatlhh, the Ksnmsta is the source of wealth that one pulls from the land to feed and sustain oneself and their family: the resources cared for in one's homelands (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document). If we examine Nuxalk ancestral land stewardship, including how people managed the Ksnmsta as compared to Western norms, we will find several academic studies detailing how Nuxalk people managed their lands and observed practices we may consider similar to the colonial tenets of ownership prior to and after contact, most of which are concentrated on the stewardship practices of caring for the existing resources, such as salmon and wild game, and cultivating plants that would serve their needs (Lewis, 2012).

While these short descriptions do not do justice to the complexity of the governance system Nuxalk employed over their lands and waters, or their everyday life, it does illustrate a system of governance and associated laws that had very particular practices around land and stewardship that were the responsibilities of the ancestral family that originated there. These rights and responsibilities were passed on to subsequent generations in a similar fashion to land rights we may consider to be "inherited" through the willing of private property in the Western tradition. Despite these similarities, Nuxalk did not entertain the concept of land "ownership" in a colonial sense. In fact, they found this to be unfathomable. McIlwraith (1948) wrote that Nuxalkmc viewed land as a "sacred" right passed on from the Creator, Alhkw'ntam, and therefore it was almost "inalienable" (p. 132). Land was intended to be cared for and utilized by the ancestral family and those rights were passed to the descendants, continuing as it would from the original ancestors who descended there at the beginning of time. Although land rights were supremely important and increased a person's wealth, it was not through the concept of private ownership. Having access to larger and larger tracts of hunting grounds based on lineage was a matter of great pride, as a person without rights to land was little better than a slave (p.132). The idea, however, that land could be taken away and alienated from use by a people was morally reprehensible and unthinkable in a Nuxalk mindset. McIlwraith (1948) recalls Nuxalk being in complete disbelief that Allied forces could take land from Germany in the First World War, as this concept was completely foreign to them (p.133). Furthermore, although Nuxalk did not conceive of property and land ownership in the Western sense, they have never recanted their claims that they are the rightful stewards of the land and have always maintained that at no time did they sell it or give it away (Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of British Columbia, 1913). McIlwraith distinctly noted this, saying, "The Bella Coola resent keenly the way in which their land has been occupied by white settlers without, according to their standpoint, proper compensation" (1948, p. 130).

A name carries both the responsibility and the concept of "rights" to a particular area, and these rights cannot be extinguished unless the family itself ceases to exist (Snxakila, 2023). In fact, after smallpox, when it seemed as though this could be a real possibility, a strategic, political event took place that ensured these land rights and responsibilities were preserved. It happened through a marriage union, where a high-ranking chief, Staltmc Waxit Pulhas (Sam Pootlass) took 11 wives, each a survivor from separate villages throughout Nuxalk homelands. By marrying them all at Q'umk'uts, he ensured that all their descendants would maintain their rights and responsibilities to all of their ancestral homelands while also gaining the rights and responsibilities to live at Q'umk'uts, as it is the women who bring homeland rights into a marriage union. This was a highly unusual event and a calculated political move to maintain a system of governance that was clearly under threat (Snxakila, 2023). It was also the beginning of the "Nuxalk Nation" as its own entity, as prior to the smallpox epidemic people resided throughout the four homelands as sovereign entities; connected but recognizing each other as independent communities. This modern application of Nuxalk ancestral law is recorded in Nuxalk's most celebrated carving, the Snxus (Sun Mask) – see figure 2: the four hands representing the four distinct territories and the 40 fingers as the surviving families, with Staltmc Pulhas in the centre as the unifying force. While modern families still have stronger connections to certain homelands through dominant family lineages, the Snxus solidifies all modern Nuxalk people's connections back to every community in their homelands, as the descendants of this unique marriage can trace their names and ancestry back to almost every region, creating a singular community with shared rights and responsibilities for all of the homelands (Snxakila, 2023).

Figure Two – Nuxalk Snxus (Sun Mask) (photo supplied by Snxakila)

Today, Nuxalk people hold names that are traceable, through their accompanying smayusta, back to their place of origin. This is one aspect of Nuxalk culture that has remained particularly strong and is indeed in a period of revival, with many people now choosing Nuxalk, not English, names for their children to demonstrate and solidify their ancestral rights and tie their lineages to those particular territories (Snxakila, 2023). On the whole, Nuxalk people have always known where their respective family lineages have come from. This has been a point of common knowledge and an unbroken chain to their origin stories that has never been forgotten (Mack, 2006). Holding a name means holding the responsibilities associated with the name's homelands, and that is an undeniable contract with the land that, for Nuxalk, has never been extinguished.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review demonstrates that there are significant differences in how land and property are understood in relation to oneself and the community or society one lives in, and that these fundamental differences can be better understood through the understanding of one's particular ontology, or worldview. The review has also shown that our relationships with land and property fundamentally impacts many aspects of our lives and that these impacts, for Indigenous peoples, have been profound.

2.1 Mapping the Process

This literature review explores scholarly research related to both Western and Indigenous relationships to land, how land is essential to the decolonization and resurgence of Indigenous peoples and explores the BC government's adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan through a critical policy lens. I accessed literature through the University of Victoria's Summon 2.0 and included the databases JSTOR, Google Scholar, ERIC (EBSCO Host), HEINONLINE, and the Critical Policy Studies journal. I also accessed material through books, policy and educational institutes, podcasts, media stories, and national non-governmental organizations. The search terms used in this study were "land back," "indigenous," "governance," "decolonization," "critical policy," "resurgence," "reconciliation," and "DRIPA."

2.2 Main Themes of the Literature Review

Unsettling Land Relations through Land Back

A community's relationship to its land base forms a key part of its culture and society and shapes how its citizens relate to the world, govern themselves, and evaluate "wealth." In this way, how one situates themselves in relationship to the land they inhabit and use forms an essential part of their "way of being," their culture, and their governance. However, there remains a significant difference between the Western concepts of land and land "ownership" and the Indigenous concepts of land as a "relationship," which in turn informs their respective ontological viewpoints (Burow et al., 2018; Sterritt, 2022; Wiersma, 2022). This literature review exposes a stark distinction between Indigenous worldviews of land – most often defined as a reciprocal relationship - and the dominant settler worldview of land as property and a source of capital and resources (Bryan, 2000).

With the understanding that maintaining the settler perspective is necessary to perpetuate settler colonialism, we see that Indigenous ontologies must be repressed to maintain settler domination and control (Tuck and Yang, 2012). These perspectives are directly tied to the Doctrine of

Discovery and the concept of "terra nullius," which has been used to ignore Indigenous rights and inform Canadian property laws around land ownership since colonization (Sterritt, 2022). This repression was also often violent and required harsh tactics based on a "politics of fear" to keep Indigenous peoples under the chosen land system's "disciplinary power" while enforcing stereotypes about Indigenous peoples as "uncivilized savages," offering the orderly, urbanization of land and property as the only alternative to a safe and productive society that was suitable for the growth of civilization (Blomley, 2003, p. 129).

Property, in the Western sense, signifies more than just fee-simple ownership of land. Beginning with the "enclosure of the commons" in 16th century England, property ownership has consistently been the foundation of our colonialist/capitalist society, and the acquisition of land for monetary gain has driven colonial expansion and the subsequent dispossession of Indigenous lands across the globe, forcing them into the labour market just as had happened in Europe many years before (Coulthard, p.7, 2014). Here in Canada, free market capitalism combined with the reserve system had the same aim of forcing Indigenous peoples into the "workplace," with the dual goal of eliminating their place-based lifestyles and attachment to their homelands and putting the land to "productive use." It did not work, as Indigenous peoples consistently demonstrated an "intense attachment" to their land and stayed close to their traditional homelands (Harris, p. 265, 2002).

The contrast between the settler ontology of possession, extraction, and economic value is consistently at odds with the Indigenous engagement in a reciprocal relationship with the land and all its inhabitants. Indeed, the development of an Indigenous state has been proposed as the only way to truly put into practice the Indigenous ontologies related to the management and governance of land (Burow et al., 2018). Indigenous identities can be considered "place-based" (Alfred, 2005; Coulthard and Simpson, 2016), and are inextricably shaped by the land upon which they reside, which in turn forms their ethical frameworks and subsequent relationships with those around them in what Coulthard and Simpson (2016) refer to as "grounded normativity." Separating Indigenous peoples from the land is akin to the removal of a limb; it severs their personal connection to their belief systems and alienates them from their Indigenous ontologies (Tuck and Yang, 2012). For Indigenous cultures and peoples to survive and thrive there must be a restoration of their relationship with the land (Weirsma, 2005). This "relationship" can mean many things and does not necessarily embody the typical western viewpoint of land acquisition and "property ownership," indeed, many times it consists of land-based practices that are outside of our current regimes, legislative structures, and spheres of thought (Bryan, 2000; Burow, et. al. 2005). Corntassel and Bryce (2012) illustrate this beautifully with their thoughtful application of Indigenous restoration of homeland relationships, made real by Bryce's revival of the traditional harvest of kwetlal in the homelands of the Songhees Lekwungen people (now colonially known as Victoria, BC). This seemingly simple act of harvesting traditional foods is both resistance and sustainable self-determination in practice;

Bryce, as a Lekwungen woman, is visibly taking back her ancestral role within her homeland and by doing so encounters the insidious settler resistance that perpetuates our colonial system.

Regardless of how it looks, land acquisition and the creation of new models of land use based on local, unique Indigenous governance practices remain the key components in the restoration of Indigenous life, alleviating poverty, and in resisting the ongoing process of colonization (Nuskmata, personal communication, April 4, 2022). Learning to incorporate these distinctive and often oppositional perspectives on how we relate to and understand land is central to developing policies and practices that are reflective and inclusive of the Indigenous peoples upon whose homelands we now reside.

Indigenous Resurgence and Decolonization

As applied to Canada's relationship with Indigenous peoples, Tuck and Yang (2012) define decolonization as a "historical process" that, at its core, is intended to change the existing world order and bring about the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (p.21). The negative impacts on Indigenous peoples' way of life due to the systematic dispossession from the land have been widely documented (Alfred, 2009; Manuel, 2015). This is in stark contrast to the definition offered by the Cambridge Dictionary (2022), which defines decolonization as "the process of a colony or colonies becoming independent." In the current context of decolonization, a challenge for community development that remains poorly addressed is to meaningfully articulate and interface with the uncomfortable reality that Indigenous resurgence and decolonization happen on the ground, and that they are fundamentally intwined with existing land resources, the large majority of which are now currently under settler control.

Indigenous resurgence and decolonization can be considered as two sides of the same coin: one cannot exist without the other and the processes are interdependent. Corntassel (2012) defines Indigenous resurgence as "the restoration of sustainable relationships with Indigenous homelands" as demonstrated through place-based practices such as gathering traditional foods, medicines, and enacting community connections and responsibilities to sacred spaces. These practices of resurgence are not metaphorical. They are real, tangible acts that seek to repatriate Indigenous land and the relationships to it; this in turn destabilizes and challenges the processes of settler colonialism on the land (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Resurgence and decolonization have to be place-based to be effective, and they must involve a return to and utilization of the land. In spite of the onslaught of colonial policies that were designed to remove Indigenous peoples from their lands, they have largely remained in the places where they have always been (Harris, p. 292, 2002). This is because the land is essentially who they are, it has formed their culture, their societies, their governance systems, their family lives, and the core of their identities for thousands of generations and has resulted in its own unique process of "grounded normativity" that is completely and thoroughly attached to the land

people are on (Simpson, 2017). Without the land there is no process of governance or of living a place-based life that is unique to one's Indigenous identity. There is nothing to hold onto, to depend upon, or to build upon.

Locally, we see acts of resurgence and decolonization happening at the grassroots level through the return of Nuxalk people to their ancestral villages and the subsequent inhabitation of these sites. In 2020 Nuxalk citizen Nuskmata and her son Kmalsuuncw returned to their family's ancestral village of Nusq'lst, which was last inhabited in 1862, and has since built a home and established a sense of family and community. In the eyes of the Province, Nuskmata may be "occupying" Crown land, but, as Nuskmata explains, this is not about rights, it is about upholding their responsibilities to protect their homeland for future generations (Gilpin, 2022). These responsibilities are separate from "rights," which Corntassel (2012) argues are an ineffective way to address Indigenous sovereignty, have been created by the colonizing state, and do nothing for the resurgence of Indigenous place-based relationships (p.93).

As demonstrated by Nusq'lst Apsulh, the processes of resurgence and decolonization are tied directly to relationship-based return to Indigenous homelands and way of life. These practices are the only way to truly disrupt settler colonialism and enable the "study" of decolonization (Corntassel, 2012; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Without direct action in the form of place-based, inclusive, community-centred practices, decolonization remains but a metaphor; something "out there" that we seek to understand and incorporate but that we have no idea how to implement or, more importantly, how to live with. Nuskmata and Kmalsuuncw's acceptance of their responsibilities to their homelands is a precise example of decolonization in action and serves as an excellent illustration of how we can begin to relate to these different ontologies of land relationships.

A Critical Policy Analysis of DRIPA Action Plan: Pathways to Action and "Reconciliation"

Critical policy studies, with its desire to "speak truth to power," is a fitting lens to utilize when examining this topic for a variety of reasons. A changing policy landscape and the incorporation of traditionally marginalized groups, such as Indigenous peoples, the poor, and other discriminated populations, are key to expanding the terms we normally associate with governance and democratic participation in policy creation (Orsini and Smith, 2007). If we understand that policy is always connected to power relationships and is experienced viscerally and emotionally, especially by those who are directly affected by it, we more deeply understand the need to invoke a critical policy lens when we talk about creating it. Incorporating these understandings into policy creation, and the commitment to incorporating transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation, is what Wiebe and Levac (2020) refer to as the practice of "policy justice." If we are examining the concept of "policy justice" in relation to this topic, we would understand that it is necessary to include those directly affected by these policies in the creation of new policies that will affect their lives. Therefore, the land policy in Nuxalk

homelands must be authored by Nuxalk people, and the understanding would be to include the place-based practices, governance, and law that would build truly reflective and inclusive policy for this community, as they define it. Only in this way would "policy justice" be truly realized.

On November 26, 2019, the Province of British Columbia made a legislative commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous peoples through its passing of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act (DRIPA), which establishes the UN Declaration as its framework for reconciliation. In 2022, the Province released its Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Action Plan, a five-year plan with 89 actions intended to address its goals and outcomes to implementing DRIPA. A key component of the government's DRIPA Action Plan purpose is to help everyone in British Columbia to understand the "importance of reconciliation and how it will help the Province achieve its greatest social, cultural, and economic potential" (p.3). Much like decolonization, reconciliation is a term that has a multitude of meanings depending on the context in which it is applied, and if we understand "reconciliation" only through the Western perception we are missing the point. Corntassel (2012) points out that many Indigenous nations do not have a word for reconciliation in their language, making it culturally irrelevant in many communities (p.93) and is framed in a way that "legitimizes state authority" (p.96).

Furthermore, the language contained in the DRIPA Action Plan also places Indigenous peoples and nations in a particular position that Glen Coulthard (2014) refers to as the "politics of recognition" (p. 3). This type of language, in which Indigenous nations are required first and foremost to be "recognized" as legitimate, worthy, and entitled to respect, immediately relegates them to a position whereby they are fighting simply to be worthy of attention and (somewhat) equal treatment in an already unequal playing field. It suggests that Indigenous nations should conform their worldviews about themselves, their governance systems, and their aspirations to colonial standards to achieve their goals, something they have long fought against. As Coulthard (2014) writes, the state appears to acquiesce some power within these colonial-driven processes, such as land claim and self-government agreements, but in reality, it maintains a colonial chokehold over Indigenous autonomy (p. 3). These processes, while allowing for some nations to inch towards a certain level of independence, do not encourage the resurgence of place-based practices many nations need to establish their own governance. Utilizing a critical policy lens, it is necessary to approach the DRIPA Action Plan with the acknowledgement that there may be some limitations on what types of policies it can truly deliver, unless it can truly incorporate the existence of multiple legal orders and the "distinctions-based approach."

In relation to land, DRIPA's Action Plan (2022) states that, "Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C." (p.15). If we examine this assertion through an Indigenous ontological lens, we can see that it incorporates language that can understood only through a Western conception of how we relate to the land and

therefore is lacking in its ability to be flexible enough to allow for alternative modes of land governance (Bryan, 2000; Sterritt, 2022).

Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred (2009) asserts that without massive restitution made to Indigenous peoples, including land, reconciliation will not be achieved (p.181). DRIPA's Action Plan (2022) appears to agree with Alfred's assertion that land must be returned to Indigenous Peoples, but to be effective these policies must incorporate Indigenous ontologies of land and land relationships. Further exploring the Action Plan through a critical policy lens, we understand that policy efforts and development are bound to be specific to each Indigenous community and therefore must be approached, informed, and ultimately developed by community to advance more equitable outcomes (Levac and Wiebe, 2020). Indeed, the policy framework may very well not exist yet (Bryan, 2000). This emphasizes the need to explore these different ontologies of land; ones that represent Indigenous peoples' particular relationship with the land and cannot be defined or categorized into our Western systems of land management.

This is particularly important to remember in the context of colonial-driven processes that are scant on details about how these new "reciprocal" relationships with colonial governments may play out. Indigenous nations cannot be reduced to the politics of recognition and expect decolonization to take place, (Coulthard, 2014), because, at its core, decolonization is an active process that is intended to disrupt settler colonialism as a structure and replace it with something else, which Tuck and Yang (2012) explain is "the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (p.1). This repatriation of Indigenous land and life can only be accomplished through the place-based practices unique to each Indigenous nation or person, derived from the lands upon which they have been connected to for as long as time remembers.

Summary

The literature surrounding the concepts of land and land relationships is vast, but there are gaps. Most notably is the gap around the application of an Indigenous worldview of land and land stewardship in our present colonial system. This is most certainly due, in part, to the fact that each Indigenous nation or society has a separate set of governing principles that need to be articulated and evaluated within the context of their modern-day situation, and this work simply may not have happened yet.

2.3 Conceptual Framework
~ Grounded Normativity

A fundamental framework has emerged to guide this study and that is the concept of grounded normativity. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) has articulated the perception that Indigenous struggles for land are not simply about the land as a piece of property, but are fundamentally informed by what the land teaches Indigenous people about living in that particular place and all of the associated knowledge that goes with it, characterizing it as more of a reciprocal relationship with the land and what it can inform us about how to live, rather than as an struggle for to enact a colonial construct of land ownership, domination, or control (p.60).

To that end, Coulthard (2014) defines the concept of "grounded normativity" as:

"The ethical framework provided by these place-based activities and associated forms of knowledge" (p. 60).

This is helpful to me as a researcher, and particularly as a settler researcher, because it requires that I honour place-based ontologies, most specifically Nuxalk place-based ontologies, as the framework for which to understand the work and the worldview that accompanies it. In addition, grounded normativity as a conceptual framework is a natural fit for the methodology used in this study, which seeks to uphold Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as legitimate in their own right and values relationships and obligations to community above all else (Kovach, 2015).

Time and time again, place-based practices, derived from the relationship with the land and its inhabitants, have proven to foster resurgence and promote Indigenous ways of life. If we want to cultivate Indigenous ways of thinking and revitalize governance structures that reflect this we must return to the place of origin, utilizing the lens of grounded normativity to guide those processes (Coulthard and Simpson, 2014). We know this: Indigenous identities have always been and will continue to be inextricably tied to the land (Harris, 2002, Simpson, 2017). Indigenous peoples have survived and continue to survive repeated onslaughts to their culture, their language, and their identities. Indigenous communities continue to advocate for their rights and responsibilities to their lands and waters, rights and responsibilities that originate from their relationship with their lands and waters that have never been extinguished.

As Snxakila (2023) explains, as long Nuxalk people are alive their rights and responsibilities to the land cannot be extinguished, as their rights and responsibilities are inherited directly from the Creator and were given to the first ancestors who descended to the earth in Nuxalk homelands, and this is where they attained them, on the land and from the land. It is only if all Nuxalk people ceased to exist that this chain would be broken. As Snxakila (2023) has repeatedly told me,

Nuxalk are Nuxalk because the land made them so: “We cannot be Nuxalk anywhere else but here.”

2.4 Conclusion

This literature review revealed three general themes that are relevant to the application of Nuxalk Ancestral Governance and land governance in the context of current colonial frameworks: the understanding of one’s particular relationship with land and property and how this shapes one’s worldview, the movement towards Indigenous resurgence and decolonization and the role land plays in these processes, and the examination of how our current policy frameworks are not equipped to support true reconciliation, especially when it comes to land repatriation. Furthermore, the review articulates how the current regime of property ownership serves to reinforce colonial systems of power (Blomley, 2023), dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land and traditions. Supporting this literature review and helping to guide the research is the conceptual framework of grounded normativity. Utilizing this framework will ensure the research returns to its roots and situates it in the place base of its origin: Nuxalk land.

Grounded normativity, as explained by Coulthard and Simpson (2016), articulates that the “relationship to land itself generates the processes, practices, and knowledge that inform our political systems” (p. 7). As the literature review has demonstrated, this statement is true not only for Indigenous peoples, but for settler societies as well. We – settlers – have created grounded normativities out of our relationship to land and property that inform and reinforce our political systems, and this has been happening for centuries. Blomey (2003), links these property “rights” directly to violence; the violence of the settler regime that has been unleashed upon “savage” communities – whether they be aboriginal, homeless, poor, or otherwise marginalized people – for hundreds and hundreds of years. Our settler “grounded normativity” is destructive, and it has caused, and continues to cause, irreparable harm to anyone in opposition to it, and confronting this destructive grounded normativity is key to decolonization and unlearning.

The motivation for my research was to determine if the principles of Nuxalk Ancestral Governance are compatible with existing colonial legislation, such as the DRIPA Action Plan, especially regarding land governance. Therefore, my literature review explores the research topic of land and the relationships we hold with it, with a particular emphasis on how one relates to land through their particular place in the world and how our relationships with land shape our society, our worldview, and our culture, which includes our governance systems (Pasternak, 2017). Examining this literature left me with a better sense of how our relationships with land impact our lives, what the effects of land dispossession are, and how we can move towards supporting a decolonized reclamation of Indigenous land and governance. It also left me with the understanding that these relationships with land are complex, multi-layered, and embody the core elements of our societal norms and beliefs. To talk about land is to talk about power and

governance, because land, who governs it and how they do it, is an expression of the dominant values of our societies (Blomley, 2003). However, what this governance looks like in practice varies wildly: it can be a reciprocal, multi-dimensional, connection-based relationship or it can be a harnessing of resources, extraction, exclusion, and control.

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

This section explains the methodology and methods utilized in this research study. This section will also detail the research design, recruitment processes, and data analysis process. As it involved human subjects, the research required Human Research Ethics Board Approval and the certificate number is 23-0044.

3.1 Research Design

When I first started to learn about research option, methods, and methodology I felt completely overwhelmed. Furthermore, it became very apparent, very early on, that none of the more "traditional" methods really resonated with me, nor did they appear to offer me the type of supportive framework I was looking for. I knew that this research was going to be Nuxalk-led, that was for certain, and I knew that the document we produced needed to be reflective of what was most useful for the Nuxalk Ancestral Governance department. This is tricky in and of itself because the process must be Nuxalk-led, and I knew that this would require some careful consideration as to how that would manifest. I thought quite deeply about how we could use storytelling to facilitate discussions and explain difficult concepts, and we discussed this as a group. Storytelling as a research methodology is a powerful tool, capable of transforming how we relate to different experiences and transmitting information across a wide spectrum of social and political life in a myriad of different ways. Storytelling is especially important in the Indigenous context, as it provides the primary means by which knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation (Thomas, 2015). Other methods, such as decolonizing, community-engaged, action research, and participatory were certainly relevant, but did not provide the whole picture I was looking for (McGregor, 2019).

The research design can be classified as qualitative, as it was concerned with phenomena that are unique to the study collaborators experiences (McGregor, 2019). It fits within the emergent approach, as we were not intent on solving a particular problem a certain way, but were more concerned with generating new ideas, concepts, and approaches that could be applied to the research question. The research method is participatory, as it was designed and adapted with the Steering Committee with the understanding that the research was not a means to an end, and that the topics we were exploring would understandably shift and change, and that our goal was to remain fluid and flexible in the process so that we would be open to what may arise (McGregor, 2019).

Given that this study aimed to examine how Nuxalk ancestral knowledge and governance may inform an existing colonial framework, one of the most important aspects of this study was to ensure that Nuxalk worldviews and knowledge are validated on their own terms and not judged in comparison to the western, colonial frameworks we are so customized to adhering to (Gaudry,

2015). The research group took a particular approach to ensure this was the case, with many often using the phrase “we don’t have to fit a square peg into a round hole” to describe how the two frameworks may or may not fit together.

Successful research studies in Nuxalk homelands have been shown to employ a combination of community-based research principles led by a distinctly Nuxalk-driven research approach rooted in trust, relationships, community engagement, respect, and representation (Beveridge, 2021, p.13). This research study consists of big, complex, and sensitive questions that stir up deep emotional responses in people. If I am going to put myself in the position to ask these questions, I need to ensure that my collaborators are on board with how the process is carried out, therefore, this study aimed to replicate, learn from, and build on past successful research in Nuxalk homelands.

3.2 Methodology: Community-engaged research

It would be negligent to begin this section without the consideration of the long history of extractive research in Nuxalk homelands beginning in the late 1800s with researchers such as Franz Boas and Filip Jacobsen. While the time period certainly contributed to how the research was conducted, it was extensively extractive nonetheless, with descriptions of the collections of “cultural material” from the northwest coast becoming “frantic and competitive, sometimes getting completely out of hand” (Bland, 2012). Nuxalk were a heavily studied group at this time, with nine men even being transported to Berlin by Jacobsen in 1885 to exhibit their culture during a tour of the country which lasted a year (Bland, 2012). Decades of such extractive treatment has made conducting research in Nuxalk homelands extremely sensitive, as Nuxalkmc remain wary of extractive processes that favour the researcher and the academy and provide little benefit to the community.

Given the shortcomings of the past, it was imperative that an action-oriented, Indigenous-led, decolonizing and anti-oppressive process focused on the co-creation of knowledge in a collective and egalitarian form the core methodologies of this study. Extractive research, including not only the possession of sacred items but also the possession of intellectual property, must be acknowledged as an existing threat. It is still an ongoing problem in Nuxalk and elsewhere that has long-lasting implications for Nuxalk people, their ancestral laws, and their autonomy over their knowledge and cultural items (Gaudry, 2015, Leischner, 2022). Centering our approach to specifically counteract extraction research was essential, as we were committed to research that results in social justice, empowering each other and the community with the tools to make actual social change through the participatory research process (Kovach, 2015, McGregor, 2019). Another important caveat to keep in mind is how much of the research is generated from the community from the outset, something that Cattapan, et. al (2020) identify as central to advancing community-based participatory research’s (CBPR) focus on social justice. This is also

essential to building and maintaining the trust essential to advance the progressive policy justice CBPR aims to deliver (Cattapan, et.al, 2020). The approach we generally employed can be considered "community-engaged," but it went deeper than that in its specific commitments to the Nuxalk-led process and what that really entailed.

Central to the research process were the principles and philosophies of what Adam Gaudry (2015) has termed "insurgent research." Insurgent research places Indigenous knowledge, processes, and community needs above the needs of the researcher and fundamentally understands that the Indigenous worldview is paramount. Most importantly, insurgent is focused on relationships, with the understanding that trust, respect, and the need to disrupt the status quo (i.e. the power imbalances between researchers and Indigenous communities) are unnegotiable elements of the research process (Gaudry, 2015). Insurgent research was especially important in this study as it provided the guiding principles that are so important to this work.

1. Research is grounded in, respects, and validates Indigenous worldviews.
2. Research output is intended for use by Indigenous communities.
3. Researchers are responsible to Indigenous communities for the decisions they make, and communities are the final judges of the validity and effectiveness of research studies.
4. Research is action oriented and inspires direct action in Indigenous communities.

(Gaudry, p. 248, 2015)

Using Gaudry's principles as a guide helped to structure the research process itself. Insurgent research is also anti-oppressive in that it serves to challenge research that may question the validity of the Indigenous worldview, the Indigenous process, and the knowledge the community holds. Insurgent research holds itself accountable to the community first, academia second, and understands that data generated through the research process is driven by the community, for the community and should be presented back to the community in a way that is accessible, inclusive, and meets the needs of the community first and foremost (Gaudry, 2015).

Scholars such as Margaret Kovach (2009) have also provided important, foundational values of Indigenous research methodologies, and she outlines four important principles that must be adhered to when working with Indigenous communities and these are ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP). These four principles align with the governance Indigenous people are now exercising when it comes to research being done in their communities and territories and have come to serve as one of many moral standards upon which researchers can gauge their work (p.5). Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) go further in this work to expose the power relations that govern research, especially in relation to Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge. As Smith (2012) ascertains, the process of research should be a disruption of these power relationships and, ultimately, a reclamation of Indigenous "self-determination, rights, and sovereignty" while at the same time facilitating healing (p. xiii).

With insurgent research principles serving to guide the study, the next step was to "Nuxalkalize" the research process. As this study was being conducted in Nuxalk homelands, with Nuxalk collaborators, it was imperative that Nuxalk knowledge was recognized, centralized, and carried out with a focus on learning, not judging, and ensuring Nuxalkmc community members have an equal role in decision-making (Victor, et. al., 2016). This was done in a more informal way but still recognised Nuxalk ceremony and protocols. In addition to sharing in a meal, collaborators used their Nuxalk names, and everyone shared in both an opening and closing prayer, as is customary at all Nuxalk events.

3.3 Methods - Focused Research Collaboration

As this research arose from conversations with the Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Office staff members, the first step was creating a Steering Committee who would be the main contacts on the research. The Steering Committee consisted of three individuals who have been directly responsible for the creation of Nunuts'xlhuusnmak – Our Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Handbook. These are:

Skw'asmana (Iris Siwallace) - co-lead on Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, Nuxalk traditional knowledge holder, ceremonial and cultural leader, Nuxalk language knowledge holder.
Dr. Snxakila (Clyde Tallio) – Alkw - fluent Nuxalk speaker, historian, and intellectual, co-lead on Nunuts'xlhuusnmak.
Suuncwakila (Jacob Gascoyne) – co-lead on Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, community organizer, language apprentice.

Once the Steering Committee was established, I began by attending the Advisory Committee Meetings for Nunuts'xlhuusnmak in late March 2023, which consisted of approximately 10 - 20 people. Although the meetings were held inconsistently, I attended, took notes, and informed the committee members of the intended research study and invited them to join as research collaborators in person and via email. By September 2023, an additional three people had joined as research collaborators, giving us a total of six collaborators who attended regular meetings.

Nuskmata (Jacinda Mack) – Nusq'lst Apsulh, community organizer, mining expert and human rights advocate, language apprentice, cultural leader, and Radical Auntie.
Qwaxw (Spencer Siwallace) – former elected Chief Councillor, Nuxalk Radio host, language apprentice, mapping expert, forestry professional.
Sp'alulhana (Carrigan Tallio) – Nuxalk Economic Development Officer, cultural leader, knowledge holder, language apprentice, and community organizer.

It is important here to honour the work of both the Nuxalk Ancestral Governance team and the creation of Nunuts'xlhuusnmak as distinct from, and very much a part of, this research.

Nunuts'xlhuusnmak is a project of the Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Office (NAG), which is nested within the Nuxalk Stewardship Office, and there were many, many people who contributed to developing this work through the years. The Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Office was initiated in 2015 to support research into Indigenous laws, and to support Nuxalk self-determination and decision-making, as directed and under the leadership of Statalmc. [5]The revitalization of this Nuxalk governance work has been fundamental; however, it also would not exist were it not for the foresight and dedication of the many Nuxalk elders who had such a profound and insightful view of what the future would bring, and who insisted this knowledge be carried on for future generations. They were the true visionaries. Without this foundational work, this research would not exist.

Each committee member is also recognized as deeply involved in cultural processes and activities in the community, and one (Dr. Snxakila) is a fluent Nuxalk language speaker while the rest are active language learners. This is important to note as the Nuxalk language is the only way to fully interpret the meaning and principles contained in ancestral governance, as the language holds the key to unlocking the realities of the concepts. Without the language the majority of what ancestral governance teaches us would not be easily accessible. That language is required to fully understand the meaning of Indigenous laws and concepts is a generally accepted truth amongst those who have studied and understand Indigenous languages, especially as they relate to laws. Unlike Canadian law, which is communicated through technical language and built on precedents, Indigenous law is often communicated through stories. The language holds the essence of the worldview of the culture, and this is something English simply cannot accurately replicate (Friedland, PhD dissertation, 2016).

Collectively, the research group holds a deep understanding of ancestral governance and, in addition, brought forth a multitude of experience in community activism, local politics and governance, history, culture, and language revitalization. The research group met monthly at my home. Before any work began, we always shared in a meal together. To share in a meal together is an essential part of Nuxalk culture, as it signifies that shared responsibility in the work and validates the process, with each collaborator also a witness to work taking place. The research was approached in a very holistic and communal way, with a focus on co-creation of knowledge and recognition of one another as equals. There was no hierarchy at the research table; it was minds coming together to explore a topic of deep importance to the Nuxalk community and to better understand the role ancestral governance could play in this work. The setting was informal, similar to a sharing circle with a focus group, with the research collaborators contributing their thoughts to the research question and generating relevant discussions. Much of what was communicated was often told through stories or examples of ceremonial practices, which served to reinforce the concept of grounded normativity (Simpson, 2017).

[5] From Nuxalk Ancestral Governance Fall 2023 Update (internal document)

The research also includes an exploration of the present-day application of Nuxalk governance. Nusq'lst Apsulh is a sast, or "returning home" of Nusq'lstmc – people of Nusq'lst – led by Nuxalk citizen Nuskmata, her son, Kmalsuuncw, and his family. Colonially we may call it a "Land Back" movement, but this description is inadequate, because the responsibility to the land was never severed. This is one example where our language is not fully accurate, and we must more deeply explain the true meaning behind what is actually taking place, as it is much more than "Land Back." For Nuxalk, and many Indigenous peoples, taking land "back" does not fully capture the deeper meaning of this work. The land was never ceded, therefore there is no one to take if back from. However, the term does contain some accuracy if one is recognizing colonial systems, which may people do. Therefore, even though the term is not quite contradictory, it is still useful to communicate the importance of land and the requirement of it for Indigenous peoples to reinstate their governance, cultural, and societal practices. Using Nusq'lst is important because it is an illustration of how Nuxalk governance is being practiced today. Nusq'lst is the embodiment of how ancestral responsibilities are being carried on and the effects this is having on modern Nuxalk lives. It is also an example of Indigenous resistance and resurgence through the practice of grounded normativity's because everything that is happening at Nusq'lst is a continuation of place-based practice that began at the beginning of time (Simpson, 2017). A more thorough exploration of Nusq'lst Apsulh is presented in the Discussion and Analysis section.

3.4 Data Analysis

All meetings were recorded on my handheld device and then transcribed using Otter transcription software. I also prepared succinct notes on the main themes of the meeting and distributed them to the collaborators directly following. AI software, as included in the Otter transcription, aided in the identification of key words. I re-listened to each of the meetings several times to ensure I was capturing and understanding the full meaning of what the collaborators were telling me before presenting the key themes of the work. The goal of this work was to remain open to what information, insights, and ideas were generated during our discussions, while also understanding what my role was in the process. The data itself was analyzed through thematic content analysis (MacGregor, 2019) and led to the identification of three main themes. These themes were discussed with the research collaborators, who provided their approval on the selection of the themes and how they related to the goals of the overall research.

3.5 Archival and Document Analysis

I spent many hours reviewing historical documents and archives (such as Historic Crown Grants and other archival data related to land in Nuxalk homelands) in addition to Nuxalk oral history and related documentation (books, studies, historical recordings) to better understand the context

and situation of Nuxalk, with a particular focus on when the first Norwegian settlers arrived, and the massive dispossession of land "officially" began. I began by cross referencing the names of the original 80 Norwegian settlers and the "familiar" names (known locally) of original settler families who I suspected may have obtained Crown land grants. I utilized the Historic Crown Grant Search tool, which is an online service through the GATOR system (Government Access Tool for Online Retrieval).

The section on "What is a Crown Grant" reads like this:

"If you are reading this in British Columbia, take a second look around you. Every single piece of land around you has a history as Crown land. All private land was originally Crown granted. Your own land was originally Crown granted or was part of a Crown grant of a larger parcel. All future private lands will have been Crown granted at some time. British Columbia sells Crown land to individuals and private sector interests. Crown grants are the legal instrument by which Crown lands are transferred to a purchaser. Each Crown grant sets out terms and conditions unique to each grant."[6]

I found this to be an incredibly revealing statement about the BC government's current position on what Crown land is and who is controlling it, both in past and in future, indicating that they have not taken any steps towards acknowledging that there was a completely different history attached to "Crown land" before the creation of the Province in 1858. This is in stark contrast to their current statements under DRIPA, which makes it clear that Indigenous title is at least to be "recognized" (DRIPA Action Plan, 2022), but also smacks highly of what Coulthard (2014) would categorize as the "politics of recognition," placing Indigenous peoples in the position of consistently having to justify their existence as distinct peoples with their own pre-contact systems of government and culture that do not require state recognition to exist.

The cross referencing of the names of the original 80 settlers and accompanying local family names in the Historic Crown Grant Search tool revealed some interesting figures in regard to land. The maps are poor and outdated, so they do not reveal exactly where in the Valley the original allotments were situated, but in most cases the amount of acreage is reported. Almost all of the land would have to be situated "up Valley," east of the Townsite and most likely east of Snx, or 4-Mile Reserve (Bella Coola IR1). Not all settlers received a pre-emption (it should be noted some were members of the same family) but the research revealed that a total of 19 pre-emptions were awarded for a total of 3,040 acres and the total cost to the settlers was $22. An additional 1,541 acres were sold through Crown Grants, which cost approximately $1 per acre in most cases. This totalled 18.69 square kilometres, and it all took place between 1860 and 1930, when the records in this system stop. This is already close to the size of Nuxalk's seven reserves, and this calculation does not account for the amount of land granted as "lots," which for

[6] From BC Government website: GATOR – Historic Crown Grants (2024) www.gov.bc.ca/pub/gator/hchelp.do

some reason are not specified by size but are mostly located in the townsite of Bella Coola. There were also a multitude of mineral claims awarded for $1, but it is unclear who has authority over these now. In addition, it is important to note that this does not include all of the Crown land granted during this time period, and as my research revealed, more grants were awarded to settlers who were not part of the original Norwegian group (Thompson, C. 2023)

During this time period, most notably during the 1913 McKenna-McBride Commission, there were many prominent Nuxalkmc expressing their unhappiness at the actions of the Province in regard to their land. During the Commission's visits to the Bella Coola region, which took place in August 1913, several Nuxalk people communicated to the Commissioner's their distress about the loss of their lands and their subsequent alienation from their traditional way of life, as well as their trust in the government to do what is right by their people.

"We are telling you all our troubles. The white people are not doing justice to us. We have lost a lot of land up the River. From the day the Government took our land, as we say, we did not get any treaty, and I am sorry that we did not do so. We have held lots of meetings about our troubles, and when the Commission was coming, we had one request to make, and that is, that you should give us more land than we have…Our Reserve is a very small one and we ought to have as much land as the white man gets, anyhow."
Captain Schooner – August 16, 1913

"Now, all up and down the salt water there are posts saying that this land belongs to the white man who have bought it from the Government. If I now take any sticks of timber from these places the white man will come along and say, "leave that alone, it belongs to me." I hear that the white men are making a good deal of money out of the land which formerly belonged to the Indians. If I were to go to The United States, England, or any part of Canada and go on anybody's land like that I would be put in jail right away, and we should like to know why our lands have been taken from us in this way. We don't want to lose any more land than we have lost already."
Chief Suncwmay (Tom Henry) – August 16, 1913

(Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Bella Coola Agency, Transcript, 1913).

The report on the reserves in Bella Coola, dated September 26, 1913, in Victoria, B.C., however, does not increase any land for Nuxalk and instead shows the 1882 reserve allotments "be confirmed as now fixed and determined." (Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of B.C., 1913). There is ample evidence to show that, during this time of excessive land acquisition by settlers, the Nuxalk were actively voicing their opposition, stating their rights to their land, and asking for it back. There is no evidence to show, however, that the Province

listened.

I also undertook an examination of the Nunuts'xlhuusnmak to understand the key findings and understandings, and to better understand how these ancestral governance practices, traditional usage, and stewardship of land might be applied in Nuxalk homelands into a present-day context. This exercise was informed by the discussions with the research collaborators, as much of what we discussed made Nunuts'xlhuusnmak make "sense." In reading Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, it was essential to attempt to adopt what Wiebe (2020) refers to as a "sensing policy" approach. Nunuts'xlhuusnmak is not a colonial document, and it is not structured in a way that aligns with a colonial mind. One must abandon the urge to analyze and dissect in a western fashion and instead engage with the senses, leaving ego behind and connecting with solutions that are not based in a traditional "policy" approach, but are informed and directed by those living the reality on the ground (Wiebe, 2020). To appreciate Nunuts'xlhuusnmak means an abandonment, as much as one can, of the western paradigm of thought, especially in the ways one relates to their natural environment.

3.6 Reliability and Validity: Establishing Credibility

Given that this was a qualitative research study, based on the principles of insurgent research, which is grounded in the Indigenous worldview, the research is subject to critiques only by those who are representing it, and the main method of establishing credibility is to ensure that the research accurately reflected those who collaborated in it (Gaudry, 2015). This was done throughout the research process through collaborative and open meetings, sharing the findings, extended periods for feedback, and a cooperative review and refinement process.

As Strega (2015) points out, validity is a social construct hinged on what dominant society deems to be accepted or authoritative (p. 145), and Ladson-Billings (2012) writes that "western concepts of truth have assumed epistemological privilege (p.115 – 120). What happens when the researcher and their collaborators do not fit into this category, as I would argue is the case with this study? Strega (2015) has a helpful framework for that situation, something she has coined "social justice validity" (p.145). To that end, the researcher must evaluate their work only to the standards and needs of the community and the research participants (Strega, 2015), as this is the heart of the matter (Gaudry, 2015). In addition, Strega (2015) requires that the research be reconstructive as well as deconstructive, "about whom?," "for whom?," presented in an accessible format, and contain an adequate amount of critical self-reflection (p. 145, 146).

The demand to prove whether Nuxalk knowledge is "credible" or not is not important. What is important is that the knowledge is acquired, understood, and presented in a way that is useful for the community to which it belongs (Gaudry, 2015, Strega, 2015). Nuxalk knowledge does not require outside approval or certification of validity. However, as Strega (2015) explains, it is

necessary to provide some criteria that allow for the connections to take place (p. 145). In this case, the Nuxalk-specific knowledge and findings presented by the research collaborators were corroborated and verified by Nuxalk oral history, frequently referenced, public historical records of Nuxalk knowledge and information (McIlwraith, 1948, Fish, 1982, Solhjell, 2008), historical documents (Royal Commission on Indian Affairs for the Province of BC, Bella Coola Agency, Transcript, 1913) and Nunuts'xlhuusnmak.

3.7 Strengths and Limitations

By far the biggest limitation of this research study was the limited number of research collaborators. The study may have been further enriched by more collaborators; however, it is important to note that the strengths brought by the particular collaborators were exceptional in their depth of understanding of the topic and their experience in community development, culture, and leadership. All of the research collaborators possessed unique skill sets that were invaluable to the study and contributed their knowledge and insights with incredible dedication.

The strengths in the approach the study utilized were in its adherence to the principles of community-engaged research and its commitment to Nuxalk protocols (Corntassel and Gaudry, 2014), which kept the study true to its roots: the community (Strega, 2015). Furthermore, the analysis of the findings, their implications, and the subsequent recommendations were carefully reviewed and refined by the collaborators, adding to the study's strengths.

For myself, it was humbling to face the incredible amount of work, time, and effort that my research collaborators had already devoted to this topic, as well as confronting the understanding that the study was limited in its participants and therefore was certainly losing out on a wider lens of history, experience, insights, and perspectives. It was certainly a limiting factor that more collaborators were not involved, but at no point did I feel that the amount of knowledge and insights generated were lacking. However, we felt certain that the study would only have been further enhanced with additional research collaborators. Hence, more work to do!

Chapter 4: Findings

In this section I present the main themes that grew from the research data. These themes were identified and elaborated on throughout the research process by the collaborators. It is important to note that these themes did not evolve through a linear process, but surfaced organically throughout the discussions as collaborators delved deeper into the topic and explored what Nuxalk governance is on their own terms; guided simultaneously by the knowledge of past generations and the freedom to explore ancestral governance as it is being applied today. Special attention was given to ensuring that the knowledge was allowed to flow freely without being attached to what Kirby and McKenna (1989, p. 32) describe as "conceptual baggage" – those "concepts, beliefs, metaphors, and frameworks that inform our perspective on and relationship to the research topic" (in Potts and Brown, 2015, p.31). Therefore, conversations were not structured, and questions were allowed to surface and be explored as they came up. The collaborators were led by the understanding that their main goal was to articulate how to support and encourage the practice of Nuxalk governance, to illustrate how Nuxalk governance is being practiced today, and, if applicable, to demonstrate how these practices can inform both the Nuxalk community and outsider colonial processes such as the DRIPA Action Plan.

It is very important to note that the collaborators were not at all interested in making Nuxalk governance "fit" or "comply" with any colonial processes, and that Nuxalk governance was discussed only in relation to itself: it was not discussed in an effort to validate, confirm, or support any existing colonial process or institution. If there are similarities or places where Nuxalk governance can facilitate the Province's fulfillment of its goals and outcomes in a way that is amenable to Nuxalk practices this is considered beneficial, but careful consideration was made to ensure that the perspective of Nuxalk governance was honoured as being distinct, and compatibilities with colonial processes – the DRIPA Action Plan goals being the main example – were identified from a Nuxalk perspective only.

"The first thought that's coming to me is just being very careful about trying not to fit into this…. these are very colonial processes and very colonial institutions."
Nuskmata (October 17, 2023).

4.1 Main Themes

Three main themes were identified:

Governance and Ceremony – the importance of practice.
Place-based – how laws and governance are tied to place.
Land Back – how governance must be practiced in the place of its origin.

Theme One: Governance and Ceremony – the importance of practice.

"The Canadian system is a reactive system, whereas our system is more preventative. You are taught the foundations in everyday life on how to be part of society, how to benefit from society, how to contribute to society…. knowing what your capacity is at what age and experience level, and what's expected of you in those age groups…you inherit a role in society and from there you get your level of decision-making."
Snxakila (November 6, 2023).

Nuxalk governance has always been a holistic practice and was not separated from one's role in their community. In traditional Nuxalk society, one's name and its associated duties would confirm and uphold the role they played. "Governance" and "law" and its relation to Nuxalk daily life are challenging to articulate because, as the handbook illustrates, the concepts that allow for the expression of Nuxalk governance are foreign to colonial mindsets, and we do not have a suitable reference point for their application and significance. This makes comparison to a colonial process difficult to do, because there are not a lot of places where the two systems obviously complement one another. In reflecting upon this, the collaborators consistently identified the need for Nuxalk citizens to have a deeper understanding of their own governance and laws, so that when it came time to inform other entities, such as the Province or other colonial institutions, Nuxalk people would be confident in their own application of their own laws and governance. Each Nuxalk person receives their right to practice ancestral laws through their own smayusta (origin story) and the applications of these laws comes through the "tools" provided to do the job, known as klhalhta. Klhalhta are the masks, names, songs, dances, technologies, and protocols and practices (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p.75 - 76) that would be used in ceremony to reiterate and uphold law and governance.

"The morals and values are woven into the teachings, but they are brought to life through ceremony."
Snxakila (November 6, 2023).

The most well-known ceremony is the potlatch (known as lhlm in Nuxalk), and it is used throughout the northwest coast as a vehicle of law and governance for many, many coastal Indigenous nations. The lhlm is central to the practice and validation of Nuxalk governance; it is the ceremony to mark an important event, it is not the event itself. Governance is practiced on the land but validated through ceremony; the lhlm is that ceremony (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p. 53).

"Every ceremony we have from birth on represents a law, a value, a protocol, and ethics to that time period in your life, but it also represents who you are and what you represent in your society."
Skw'asmana (November 6, 2023).

The research collaborators consistently reiterated that ceremony is an essential component of Nuxalk governance, and it's important for several reasons. Ceremony allows for witnesses and validation of governance, but it also allows for personal learning, growth, and incorporation of oneself into a legal system. To be confident in the application of Nuxalk governance means that one must see oneself inside it, be integrated in the system, and understand one's own role within it. Ceremony is an essential part of making that happen, as it incorporates the individual and the practice together as one and the same, embodying the essence of Nuxalk governance and its accompanying worldview. Governance in practice is ceremony; the two are interchangeable. To this end, the collaborators were adamant that ceremonial practices need to be revived, practiced, and supported. In this way, Nuxalk governance is visible, active, and inclusive.

Ceremonies and their accompanying governance implications are significant, and the collaborators agreed that practicing ceremonies is practicing governance, and that governance needs to be practiced to be considered "legal" today. There are several Nuxalk ceremonies that are widely in use today, and several that are being revived, that are held both as part of a lhlm (potlatch) or hosted independently such as the Apcwaakm (uplifting of the babies) and the Ts'ktalclayc (Coming of Age). There are also ceremonies connected to sacred times such as si7mt (winter solstice) that are performed by members of specific societies, such as members of the Kusyut society, who also would hold a specific role in Nuxalk governance. The collaborators agreed that in the interest of all Nuxalk citizens the practice of ceremony and its accompanying legal implications needs to be expanded and enhanced, so that through ceremony the application of governance becomes more accessible, understood, and available to all.

Theme Two: Place-based – how governance is tied to land and place.

Nuxalk are not unlike other Indigenous nations in the sense that their governance systems evolved from their homelands, and this fact makes them specifically applicable to Nuxalk homelands. The smayusta (origin story) connects Nuxalk people to their homelands, and this land-base becomes the home for the apsulh (village) (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p. 36). It is within this place that the laws to govern the apsulh emerged, and as each apsulh is located in a distinct region or place, the laws that emerge there are also distinct. As demonstrated by the place-specific story of the four brothers at the apsulh of Q'umk'uts: each have rights to the abundance of fish in their weir, but they must balance their own needs while remaining accountable to the laws of that place. The weir cannot be "owned" without being shared; the needs of the people upriver must be considered, and the wealth must be shared. The

rights to govern that place and its accompanying wealth, such as the abundance of fish in the weir, cannot exclude the rights of those upriver to food, and cannot exclude the rights of the salmon to travel upriver to spawn (Snxakila, as told to the research group on November 19, 2023).

"Government regulations always try and fit things into their system. We don't fit into that, and that is recognizing us as our own people. We don't fit into their system; we have our own system and it's completely separate."
Qwaxw (November 19, 2023).

Additionally, through the smayusta, each Nuxalkmc living in a certain area would have su7ulm – the right to use the lands and waters and the responsibilities to care for them for future generations (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p. 44). However, these rights would be tempered, balanced, and determined by the place in which they are being practiced. Certain territories would come with certain responsibilities which would be reflected in the laws and governance; all of the distinctions would be rooted in place. To understand Nuxalk governance one must understand its connection to place: the land shaped the laws, therefore the laws must be practiced in place. The place-based distinction is in direct opposition to colonial legislation, which blankets entire regions with the same rules and regulations, giving no credit to place-based knowledge or identity.

"They can't take Nuxalk stuff and spread it out all across all of so-called B.C…over here there are these laws, over there are those laws, there's not B.C. law all over everything."
Qwaxw (November 19, 2023).

It is here that the collaborators also discussed the Province's use of the term "distinctions based" to describe variations amongst the multitude of Indigenous nations it is trying to encapsulate into its new DRIPA Action Plan.

"The government wants to have a cookie cutter formula for such a vast difference of peoples."
Nuskmata (November 19, 2023)

While the "distinctions-based" approach is not wrong, the collaborators determined that, for Nuxalk, a more accurate description would be "place-based," as laws and governance flowed and evolved from the places of their origin. Governance did not emerge from a place of reaction, but rather from a place of response: response to the needs of one's environment, and that environment was a particular place in Nuxalk homelands. Governance reflected the people and their worldviews, shaped by the particular places in which they lived. Nuxalk governance, broadly speaking, contains principles of conduct that are generally considered universal across the region however, each distinct homelands would have its own set of particular laws relating to

the requirements of the land and the people who lived there, and these laws would have evolved and changed over time as the requirements evolved and changed.

Attacking and removing place-based laws and replacing them with a "one-size fits all" colonial system is about power and control. It consolidates influence, streamlines processes, and makes it simpler for colonial systems to operate. Place-based laws do not bend to the will of an autocratic system that is designed to manage and extract for maximum benefit. Place-based laws are reflective, responsive, and uniquely positioned to serve both the needs of the inhabitants and the needs of the land.

"It's about power and dominance and greed, it's about capitalism, patriarchy, fear-based systems that manipulate and divide, and our system is the opposite and that's why it is such a threat."
Nuskmata (November 19, 2023).

Theme Three: Land Back – how governance must be practiced in the place of its origin.

Building on the place-based origins of Nuxalk law and governance, the collaborators now articulated how these laws and governance can be put into practice and the consensus is very clear: Nuxalk governance must be practiced in the place of its origin, and that requires land to be under Nuxalk jurisdiction; the land is the source of the governance in the first place and the land is required to practice. Without access to land, the practice of ancestral governance is stunted; it cannot realize its full capabilities. Again, land and governance are one and the same. They are tied to one another and cannot be falsely separated, as the colonial system has attempted to do.

"That's where our laws are based, in the land."
Suuncwakila (November 19, 2023).

"It's so simple, all they have to do is one thing. Land back. That's what it's all about, that's what it always is going to be about, the land and water."
Nuskmata (November 19, 2023).

The separation of Nuxalk people from their land contributed heavily to the collapse of their legal system, an intended consequence of colonialism. The potlatch was such a threat to colonial systems of land governance that it had to be suppressed by force through a ban that lasted almost 70 years; long enough for generations of people to lose that connection to law and to land. The potlatch also demonstrated a system of governance, directly tied to lands and resources, that was based on a distribution of wealth and power. This was in complete opposition to the colonial worldview, which is focused on capitalism, private control, and individual gain.

Nuxalk describe themselves as sovereign, with the same rights and responsibilities as any other sovereign nation. A sovereign country has a complex system of laws, and these systems were directly tied to land and resources and functioned as its own entity. To that point, a sovereign entity requires a defined homelands upon which to govern itself (Shaw, 1986). Nuxalkmc were not any different in this sense, having systems of laws that operated throughout their homelands and relationships with other governing, sovereign nations with their own sets of laws.

"We are a sovereign nation; we are a country. We are not tribes or bands; the language Canada uses to describe us isn't equal. We were countries with our own territories, our own laws, our own governance, with our own economy. We were part of a coast that had its own international law."
Snxakila (November 19, 2023).

"We need to remember we are going for a collective goal…we can make these steps to governing our own lands and resources…if we come at from a nation standpoint saying look, you guys have depleted our fish, you haven't managed it well, so now we are going to take back the rights and we're going to manage it. So, what does that look like now? We manage the water…we start changing things."
Sp'alulhana (December 12, 2023).

In order to function fully as a sovereign entity, Nuxalk must have land upon which to govern. Confinement to reserves that are under federal control does not reflect Nuxalk governance or allow for the practice of law in the present day. Land back is the only way to ensure that governance is practiced in its entirety, and it is the only way to move forward in true reconciliation.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to apply the research findings and accompanying examples to the research problem. The findings revealed some essential components of practicing and applying Nuxalk governance, noting the importance of ceremony, place-based origins, and the requirement of land. This chapter will use the real-life example of Nusq'lst Apsulh to analyze how this is taking place, and the discussion section will explain why this research is important and what it means to the broader theoretical body of knowledge.

5.1 Analysis: Grounded Governance in Action ~ Nusq'lst Apsulh and its Application of Nuxalk Governance

"If we are going back to the land, getting the land back, why don't we just follow the blueprint in the smayusta?"
Snxakila (December 12, 2023).

I am approaching this analysis with the understanding that Nuxalkmc believe most deeply in Nuxalk sovereignty. Nuxalk are somewhat unique in the fact that they have remained a non-treaty nation and have steadfastly resisted this most deterministic form of colonial reconciliation. There is a specific reason for this, and it ties directly to Nuxalk law. As the late Nuxalk Staltmc Nuximlayc (Lawrence Pootlass) stated, treaty was a direct violation of Nuxalk law in that it removed the land rights from the putl'lt (those not yet born), and this was not permitted, as those living did not have the right to deny the homelands from future generations (as told by Snxakila, 2023). As explained in earlier chapters, an individual's su7ulm gives them "ownership" rights over land, but not at the cost of future generations ownership rights. In this way, rights cannot be extinguished unless all Nuxalkmc cease to exist.

Nusq'lst Apsulh is important because it demonstrates how Nuxalk governance operates from the position of sovereign entity and that Nuxalk governance is an inherent right and responsibility that never has been and never will be tied to any sort of Crown government, rejecting what Coulthard (2014) would categorize as the politics of recognition. *Sast* (returning to your home) at Nusq'lst Apsulh may appear like to be a land back "movement" but, at the same time, returning to live at Nusq'lst is simply a continuation of life as it has always been and will continue to be (Simpson, 2017).

The return of Nuxalkmc families to Nusq'lst and the revival of Nuxalk governance throughout Nuxalk homelands are powerful statements of Nuxalk Sovereignty. What makes Nusq'lst particularly impactful is that one can make connections with all of the activities and practices of Nusq'lst and link them to the foundations of Nuxalk governance, which is really a continuation of Nuxalk law and life originating from the smayusta of Nusq'lst itself. To understand why Nusq'lst is so important to Nuxalk sovereignty, we need to examine it as its own entity through the lens of Nuxalk governance, as the research collaborators have explained to me.

As demonstrated earlier, the foundations of Nuxalk governance are housed in four key foundational elements, known as the four slhiixw:

Smayusta: Origins – Where Nuxalk law comes from.
Klhalhta: Practice – Where Nuxalk law gathers its strength.
Tcamatlhh: Location – How Nuxalk law is validated and reinforced.
Kw'alhtnta: Purpose – What Nuxalk law means for the Nation today.

Nusq'lst Smayusta

Nusq'lst is the most prominent mountain in Nuxalk, rising high above the land and appearing to watch over the whole homelands. It is the source of many stories and is often referred to as the "Sleeping Giant," because it looks like the figure of a man lying down. This was the "time of

Giants," during which the path was cleared so that people could live on earth. Nusq'lst is a place where many first ancestors landed on this mountain from Nusmata – the above earthly plane where the supernatural beings reside, and where the Creator, Alhkw'ntam, makes his home. One of these ancestors bore the same name, making Nusq'lst a significant location in Nuxalk origin stories. As McIlwraith (1948) explained, Nusq'lst is "a chief among mountains" (p. 305).

One documented story of Nusq'lst smayusta details how a first ancestor named Kmalsuuncw descended from the mountain top to the apsulh. He was a powerful man who gave many potlatches, and the first people who lived at Nusq'lst constructed their homes to represent the five distinct peaks of the mountain, a tradition which continued into the 1900s (McIlwraith, p. 305, 1948). Today, the name Kmalsuuncw is held by two Nuxalkmc, a name associated with a staltmc (hereditary leadership), proving how the link to the ancestral rights and responsibilities of Nusq'lst has not been extinguished. Nuskmata, her son Kmalsuuncw, her late father Nusq'lst, and other relatives who carry ancestral Nusq'lstmc names, are part of the ancestral family rebuilding in their ancient and ancestral village.

The smayusta of Nusq'lst – and all of the smayusta throughout Nuxalk homelands – illustrate the unequivocal Nuxalk connections to place. The smayusta of Nusq'lst belong only to Nusq'lst – it is not replicated anywhere else on this earth. Examining Nusq'lst Apsulh and all of its associated practices and protocols, we realize that we are as closely connected to the concepts of grounded normativity and authority as one can possibly be. As Coulthard (2014) writes, "Place is a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others" (p. 61). Nusq'lst is Nuxalk governance in practice and is an undeniable exemplification of the unique worldview that informs Nuxalk governance and its subsequent relationship with the land of its origin (Coulthard, p.60, 2014). The smayusta is the heart of that relationship.

Nusq'lst Klhalhta

The validity of Nuxalk ancestral law is demonstrated by the Klhalhta. These are the "tools" that one uses to practice the law, and it includes the protocols and practices that are used to care for the Ksnmsta (land and resources). Part of the protocols followed by the Nusq'lstmc (people of Nusq'lst) family at Nusq'lst Apsulh include the ceremonies of raising a stwin (memorial panel) in honour of Nuskmata's late father, Nusq'lst (Dayton Mack) in 2009, to a potlatch announcement in 2018, a family meeting 2020, and hosting a Stutu7apsulh – a community building event – in 2022, to honour the work taking place and to keep the community informed and engaged, and hosting an Apcwaakm (uplifting of the babies) to mark the first year of life of the family's newest member, one year-old Siyani, in 2023. These ceremonies are governance in action, in practice, and they are fulfilling that work of making governance accessible, visible, tangible, and inclusive. They are also being held in the place of their origin, are unique to that location, and are reflective of the particular work that the place requires in order to be recognized

in Nuxalk governance as having its own laws. Witnesses to these ceremonies also validate the work of the Nusq'lstmc (people of Nusq'lst), and through this witnessing then become the ones to uphold Nuxalk governance to the rest of the community and the world. The expression of Klhalhta and ceremony have been well-documented as an integral part of governance that permeates every aspect of Nuxalk life, and the practice of utilizing one's Klhalhta is how Nuxalk governance is honoured throughout one's community and beyond.

Nusq'lst Tcamatlhh

Tcamatlhh embodies not only the physical aspects associated with one's place but also the responsibilities to care for them, and Nuxalk who hold names of tcamatlhh are responsible for activities related to a particular place (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, 2022, p. 76). They are also responsible for managing the activities of others who are utilizing that particular place. However, all those living in the homelands related to one's tcamatlhh have the obligation to care for the lands and water, as tcamatlhh also grants the right to make a living where one lives. For Nusq'lstmc, managing and caring for the tcamatlhh at Nusq'lst Apsulh included taking some important steps such as controlling land and river access, fishing and harvesting, utilizing timber from the land to build their home, ensuring the land is cared for and the water is clean, and maintaining sacred sites such as graves and former villages. Undertaking all of these activities is the expression of managing one's ksnmsta, which are the plants and animals, the resources, the source of wealth in the apsulh. One works one's ksnmsta to feed and clothe oneself, and doing so is an act of governance. The practice of working one's ksnmsta, especially in relation to tcamatlhh, is the embodiment of what Corntassel (2008) would refer to as "sustainable self-determination," as it is dictated solely by the relationship to the land and does not conform with traditionally, western-defined "rights," rather, it is connected to the relationships and responsibilities connected specifically to that particular homeland (p.107).

Nusq'lst Kw'alhtnta

Kw'alhtnta is what gives purpose to Nuxalk governance, and at Nusq'lst this is demonstrated in several ways. Kw'alhtnta are crests; they are representations of the cloaks the first people chose when they descended to earth. They are now a symbol of lineages and of the direct relationships people have with Alhkw'ntam (the Creator), with their ancestors, and with animals and other beings. Kw'alhtnta also is a unifying force: it ties together families and makes people accountable to past and future generations (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, unpublished document, p. 77). Siyani's Apcwaakm is a beautiful illustration of kw'alhtnta, as it connects directly to the responsibility to future generations and completes the endless loop generated by the smayusta, which dictates that each subsequent generation carries on with its obligations to the land for the future.

"This little baby will be the first baby raised up in this Nuxalk village, not on the reserve, since 1862. It's about our sovereignty. It's about our responsibility, it's about proving that we are capable and can do it, and that we have everything we need."
Nuskmata, 2022

Returning home to Nusq'lst embodies the essence of kw'alhtnta, in particular accountability. As Nuskmata (2022) explains:

"We don't need to ask permission from the Crown or anybody to build in our home villages. Our bloodlines connect directly back to these places. Our sense of identity is very strong. We know exactly where we come from in this world, and it is our duty to protect that for future generations and enjoy it in our own lives as well. You can't have rights without responsibilities. It's our responsibility to take care of our village. It's our responsibility to let people know where they are, to protect our forests and river, and to protect our homelands for future generations. I take that seriously in our family."

Responsibilities to future generations refutes the western concepts of "rights" as being hinged on the present moment and shifts the focus to sustainable self-determination. Embedded in sustainable self-determination is the intent to transmit these responsibilities, and the knowledge carried with it, to future generations through ceremonial life, practiced at the local level (Corntassel, 2008). This is the purpose of kw'alhtnta: to bring full circle the responsibilities and ensure they are carried on through the next generation to come.

5.2 Discussion:
~ The Contribution of Nuxalk Governance

The research collaborators description of how Nuxalk governance can be practiced, expanded, and supported provides a path forward for Nuxalk to return to their homelands in a way that honours their unique place-based laws and governance practices. The findings also provide firm examples – demonstrated by Nusql'st Apsulh and its accompanying practices and ceremonies – of governance in action today. As articulated by the research collaborators, these examples do not deviate from their origin sources – they stem from the connection to place (Coulthard, 2014). This is important because it demonstrates to the community that these governance practices are alive and well, and that by practising they can also nuyalcalh – clear the path – for others to follow in reviving their traditional place-based laws and governance as dictated by their smayusta. The findings also provide a continuum for Nuxalk governance to engage with colonial structures and institutions and, if desired, explore where it is and is not compatible with existing colonial frameworks, using the goals in the DRIPA Action Plan as the main example.

The three key themes identified by the research collaborators - governance and ceremony, place-based, and land back - are directly supported by the conceptual framework of grounded normativity, which understands that place and place-based practices form the essence of culture, law, and governance. Without the connection to the place, the practice is not complete, and it cannot be considered "whole." To that end, an essential component is the availability of land to practice upon, otherwise the full reality of the practice cannot be realized (Simpson, 2017). The understanding of governance as a holistic and spiritual experience, as well as the relationship to land as a responsibility to future generations, challenges our western notions of property and ownership in a way that turns the system on its head (Bryan, 2000). The Nuxalk understanding of land and property as a responsibility not only to oneself and others in the present day, but also as a responsibility to future generations through the concept of su7ulm, is a direct contradiction to settler-crafted policies based on extractive, profit-driven practices that are designed to pull the maximum benefit from the land for its present-day occupants, with little to no thought or care for the land or its future inhabitants (Pasternak, 2017). Further, the findings have reinforced that understanding relationship to property and land "ownership," as relevant to Indigenous peoples, is determined by their distinct worldviews and, in direct contradiction to our western viewpoints, it cannot be broadly categorized or understood (Bryan, 2000).

The findings make a strong contribution to the theoretical body of knowledge around grounded normativity, worldviews and property, and land back. The findings have indicated that Nuxalk governance cannot be implemented without access to land upon which to practice, as this was the original source of the laws in the first place. The findings have also indicated that Nuxalk's worldview as it relates to land, governance, and relationships to land are governed by its own unique set of tenets that are again derived from the land, forming a set of beliefs and relationships that are grounded in a particular place and its accompanying culture (Bryan, 2000). The assertions of the research collaborators that land is essential for governance are supported by the theories of grounded normativity (Coulthard, 2014, Simpson, 2017) and questions around jurisdiction and control, including who benefits and how, are further supported by Shiri Pasternak's (2017) work around "property as a technique of jurisdiction," which underlines how settler legal orders were created with the aim of "colonizing Indigenous peoples and their lands" (p. 99). Today, we still exist in these same colonial spaces, yet we are expected to continue to "advance" as a society, promoting equality, equal opportunity, and inclusion at every turn. But how can these ideals be realized in a colonial space that clearly excludes Indigenous peoples and their direct relationships with their homelands.

If we understand community development to be rooted in human rights, inclusion, social justice, self-determination, and collective action (Kenny, S., and Connors, P., 2017), all of which are connected to reconciliation, then we must commit to addressing our shortcomings on these fronts. In Canada, all of our communities were built on Indigenous spaces, and yet our colonial systems and our accompanying communities need to do more to honour the human rights,

inclusion, and self-determination of the original inhabitants of these spaces. This is reflected in everything from the colonial institutions that govern these spaces – from the federal Indian Act to the local municipalities – to the colonizing names we have adopted and are reluctant to change.[7]

A vast majority (72 percent)[8] of Canadians have said they support reconciliation. However, if we are interested in true reconciliation, we must be prepared to make real, substantive changes that recognize and incorporate Indigenous governance and return governance authority to Indigenous communities. For reconciliation and decolonization to occur, concrete, tangible, transactions must take place that unseat the colonial processes that have allowed for colonialism to be imposed in the first place. Indeed, even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC): Calls to Action (Royal Proclamation and Covenant of Reconciliation, 47) has specifically pointed out that the concepts used to justify the theft of Indigenous land, and continue to perpetuate the status quo, must be rescinded, stating: "We call upon federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments to repudiate concepts used to justify European sovereignty over Indigenous peoples and lands, such as the Doctrine of Discovery and terra nullius, and to reform those laws, government policies, and litigation strategies that continue to rely on such concepts" (2015). If we are interested in true reconciliation and decolonization, we must be prepared to hand over the reins; we must support Indigenous communities as self-governing entities, truly incorporate Indigenous governance into our existing legal systems (i.e. multiple legal orders) and support the creation of new systems. As we continue to grow as a society and a culture, and for the field of community development, such progressions will only serve to benefit us all.

[7] From Trumpener, B (2020) *First Nation upset as bitter debate over giving school Indigenous name ends in "compromise"* www.cbc.ca/bc
[8] From Hopper, T (2022) *Vast majority of Canadians support reconciliation, even if they differ on the details: poll*. www.nationalpost.com

Chapter 6: Responding to the Research Question

As detailed in the beginning of the paper, the objective of this research was to understand if the principles and application of Nuxalk governance and the goals of the Province under the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan can support one another/are compatible, especially regarding land governance. The research collaborators chose to undertake this question with the knowledge that colonial recognition is not required to validate any aspect of Nuxalk law and governance; however, the collaborators also recognize that colonial systems will continue to play a role in their lives and the lives of future generations. Therefore, it was decided that an exploration of this question was a worthwhile exercise, both to expand the comprehension of Nuxalk governance in its own right as well as to explore if there was any place of compatibility or similarity.

6.1 Nuxalk Governance and the DRIPA Action Plan Goals ~ Two Worldviews

Broadly speaking, the principles of Nuxalk governance, which encompasses how Nuxalk define their social norms as according to their worldview, do not bear much resemblance to our colonial legal system, as the worldviews which created the two systems are so different (Coulthard, 2014, Simpson, 2017). However, in this examination of if the principles and application of Nuxalk Ancestral Governance and the goals of the Province under the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' Act Action Plan can support one another/are compatible – especially in the context of land governance – the study will consider both the "distinctions-based approach" and the recognition of "multiple legal orders." The distinctions-based approach of the DRIPA Action Plan (2022) "requires that the Province's dealings with First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples be conducted in a manner that acknowledges the specific rights, interests, priorities and concerns of each, while respecting and acknowledging these distinct Peoples with unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments." It also allows for the inclusion of "different approaches or actions and result in different outcomes" (p.3). The shared understanding of "multiple legal orders" or "legally plural," means that the Province recognizes that within Canada there are "multiple legal orders, including Indigenous laws and legal orders with distinct roles, responsibilities and authorities." (p.6)

Theme 1: Self Determination and Inherent Right to Self-Government
(Goal: Indigenous Peoples exercise and have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government, including developing, maintaining, and implementing their own institutions, laws, governing bodies, and political, economic, and social structures related to Indigenous communities) (p.10)

As this research has demonstrated, the application of Nuxalk governance, through ceremony and practice of Nuxalk laws in a place-based setting, such as Nusq'lst Apsulh, is a direct expression of self-determination and self-government. These practices are explicitly supported by the Province in its shared understanding of a distinctions-based approach and its recognition of multiple legal orders, where the DRIPA Action Plan details how the Province supports all aspects of Indigenous people to "exercise and have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government," and First Nations are to implement "freely chosen government systems" (p. 10). The publishment of Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, the community-led practices of ceremony and governance, and the governance practiced in the re-establishment of Nusq'lst Apsulh are all compatible with the Province's goal to support and honour Indigenous peoples' work of "developing, maintaining, and implementing their own institutions, laws, governing bodies, and political, economic and social structures related to Indigenous communities" (p. 10).

Theme 2: Title and Rights of Indigenous Peoples
(Goal: Indigenous Peoples exercise and full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C.) (p.14)

When it comes to the concepts of "rights" over land and territories, Nuxalk governance is connected more to the concept of "responsibilities." However, the research clearly articulates that Nuxalk have the right to enjoy their ancestral territories as they have always done, and that with these rights comes a set of responsibilities that are embedded in their governance structure (Nunuts'xlhuusnmak, 2022). Within the scope of this research study, the research collaborators have demonstrated that Nuxalk governance originates from and is still connected to Nuxalk homelands, and that governance must be practised in its place of origin. This right to their homelands - su7ulm - and its associated responsibilities was never extinguished and continues to be exercised through applications such as Nusq'lst Apsulh. Therefore, if there is to be compatibility or support between the two systems of governance, it is essential that the Province honor and respect Nuxalk's right to govern on their homelands, from their homelands, employing the land-based governance and practices that are specific to Nuxalk, as demonstrated by Nusq'lst Apsulh, as to do so would be compatible with the DRIPA Action Plan goal of Indigenous Peoples to "exercise and full enjoyment of their inherent rights, including the rights of First Nations to own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories in B.C" (p.14).

Conclusion

The Province uses language in the DRIPA Action Plan that is supportive of Nuxalk governance through its shared understanding of multiple legal orders and its commitment to a distinctions-based approach. Should Nuxalk choose to engage through their governance structure

with the Province, it is possible that the DRIPA Action Plan can support Nuxalk governance if the Province explicitly respects the "distinctions-based approach" of Nuxalk sovereignty and honours Nuxalk governance as its own "legal order" when fulfilling the goals of the DRIPA Action Plan. Nuxalk governance is alive and well, and in this context, it's important to understand that if the Province's DRIPA Action Plan goals are actually going to be compatible with and supportive of Nuxalk governance, *they must be accompanied by policies that support the affirmation and resumption of jurisdiction and governance authority of Nuxalk lands to Nuxalk*. To do otherwise would be a direct contradiction of the Province's own goals. To develop these policies, one must employ the critical policy lens, with a commitment to "policy justice" and the commitment to incorporating transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge creation (Wiebe and Levac, 2020).

Land policy in Nuxalk homelands must be authored by Nuxalk people, and the understanding would be to include the place-based practices, governance, and law that would build truly reflective and inclusive policy for Nuxalk, as they define it. The decision on whether to engage with the Province through DRIPA or other colonial frameworks on how to do this work is left to Nuxalk, because for Nuxalk, governance over their land continues regardless. Therefore, the conclusion can only be that there are many possibilities for next steps.

Chapter 7: Research Implications

The strategic and practical implications of this research can be divided into two general categories. The first is how the research can be helpful to Nuxalk themselves concerning the application of governance in the present day, and the second is how it can be helpful to Nuxalk concerning how to inform colonial processes, relationships, and institutions.

7.1 Implications of Research Inside Community

Continued development of Nuxalk governance

In continuing the development of Nuxalk governance, the research collaborators made it clear that Nuxalk governance must continue to be developed as a distinct entity; reflected unto itself as its own source of power and authority that does not require any outside validation or recognition. This is already happening, and will continue (Coulthard, 2014). Nuxalk governance will continue to be researched and articulated through community-led processes and partnerships (Corntassel, 2012), and the continued development of Nunuts'xlhuusnmak to make it widely available to Nuxalkmc will also play a major role in community participation and implementation of governance by individuals. Finally, the use Nuxalk governance as the lens through which to understand and evaluate Nuxalk-led initiatives in Nuxalk homelands (Coulthard, 2014) will undoubtedly contribute to the further practice of governance on the land and the incorporation of governance into Nuxalk's own policies for land stewardship.

Community actions of support for Nuxalk governance

Community action and support for Nuxalk governance will continue via the encouragement for a return to ancestral homelands, encouragement, normalization, and support for place-based action, and uplifting of work already taking place through ceremony and recognition. A leadership/community declaration of support for Nusq'lst Apsulh and related governance initiatives, and the utilization of signage to acknowledge and support Nusq'lst place based responsibility and control over homelands will add to these efforts. The support the practice of Nuxalk governance within current community-led activities, enterprises, and related entities (Corntassel, 2012), and support the incorporation of Nuxalk governance in current policy and decision-making processes in Nuxalk institutions and organizations are all taking place to encourage the continued revival of governance practices.

7.2 Implications of Research Outside Community

Inform external relationships (communities, governments, businesses).

Nuxalk governance can be used to inform external (non-Nuxalkmc) organizations with the perspective of Nuxalk law and governance and contribute to a better understanding of the local context (Corntassel and Gaudry, 2014). Furthermore, the present-day application of Nuxalk governance can help to educate and inform outside entities about how to approach their relationships with Nuxalk in their homelands (Corntassel and Gaudry, 2014).

Inform approach to colonial institutions, frameworks of engagement, and legislation

Nuxalk governance can be utilized as the authoritative position from which to approach conversations about activities within Nuxak homelands (Coulthard, 2014), and it can be utilized as the lens through which to analyze and evaluate the suitability, relevance, and impacts of colonial-led initiatives operating or wishing to operate in Nuxalk homelands (Coulthard, 2014).

7.3 Policy Implications

The policy implications for this work depend upon who is utilizing this knowledge and how. For Nuxalk, their governance structure provides a solid foundation from which to build their own "modern-day" policies for continuing to govern their homelands. Values that are central to Nuxalk governance, such as the concept of systems such as putl'lt – the obligations to those unborn – could prove to be transformational once put into practice in a modern setting. The delivery of Nuxalk governance policies will depend on how they are interpreted and applied in an environment that is fundamentally different from where they originated. This is the challenge, not only for Nuxalk but for colonial governments as well. For colonial governments, the policy implications may not be immediately applicable but rather could act as a guidance on how to engage with Nations. The crux of the issue will be in understanding how colonial systems can adapt to either incorporate the core elements of Indigenous governance and subsequent policies that have these transformational capabilities, or how colonial governments can step aside and remove themselves from the majority of these processes to allow a new reality to form. This is certainly a work in progress for many, many communities as we navigate the effects of colonialism coupled with new commitments to reconciliation.

7.4 Recommendations
~ Continuing the Work

Utilizing the three main themes identified by the research collaborators, the following preliminary recommendations have been developed with the understanding that more will follow in time.

1. **Governance and Ceremony – the importance of practice.**

The incorporation, encouragement, and revival of traditional ceremonial and governance practices associated with community and individual milestones, territories, and responsibilities (Simpson, 2017) will play an important role in moving forward. The re-establish of ceremonial societies (i.e. Kusyut, Sisawk) responsible for specific governance responsibilities and ceremonies (Simpson, 2017) will assist in broadening the reach of governance and ceremony in community. Finally, as desired and/or where appropriate, Nuxalk governance can be utilized to leverage colonial processes into action – i.e. DRIPA and the inherent right of First Nations to "have full enjoyment of their rights to self-determination and self-government…and implement their freely chosen government systems" (DRIPA Action Plan p.14).

2. **Place-based – how laws and governance are tied to land and place.**

Creating opportunities for families to re-establish connections to their lands and waters, and supporting the return of ancestral families to their lands and waters are essential to re-establishing the place-based connection to governance. (Corntassel, 2014). Research, sharing, and continued development of place-based laws of specific territories, regions, lands, and waters (Coulthard, 2014) are key components of revitalizing laws that are specifically connected to Nuxalk homelands. Finally, recognizing that for Nuxalk "distinctions-based" can also be considered "place-based." Therefore, as desired and/or where appropriate, Nuxalk governance can be utilized to leverage colonial processes into action – i.e. DRIPA where the "distinctions-based rights of Indigenous Peoples are respected, upheld, and exercised" (DRIPA Action Plan, p.14).

3. **Land Back – how governance must be practiced in the place of its origin.**

Support for the continued efforts of Nusq'lst Apsulh through solidarity, learning, and action (Simpson, 2017), mapping and detailing Nuxalk ancestral village sites, in particular identifying which sites can support immediate sast (Nuxalk homecoming), will be essential in supporting more Nuxalk people who wish to return to their ancestral homelands and reclaim their governance responsibilities. Holding governance ceremonies and related practices on the land of their origin as often as possible will continue to assert Nuxalk jurisdiction over land governance, and as desired and/or where appropriate, utilizing Nuxalk governance to leverage colonial

processes into action – i.e. DRIPA and the inherent right of First Nations to "own, use, develop and control lands and resources within their territories" (DRIPA Action Plan, p.14).

It is important to note that this list is built upon the work Nuxalk Ancestral Governance is already doing. It is not intended to be a prescriptive list, but rather a compilation and expansion of work that is currently taking place.

7.5 Back to the Land
~ Revisiting Grounded Normativity

Fully understanding grounded normativity as a conceptual framework is an "unlearning" process that I now see as essential to decolonizing our thinking, which, of course, is the first step towards decolonizing the rest of our lives. One need only to look to the Nuxalk concept of putl'lt, which ensures that the land is always cared for with future generations in mind, to see how differently the two legal systems approach land and resource "management." If the colonial system adopted a similar approach, it is almost certain we would not be facing the type of environmental crises we are today. If we cannot make the necessary transition to at least an attempt at figuring out where another's worldview has come from, we are truly stuck. As Corntassel and Guadry (2014) write, experiences through the grounded normativity of a particular place are awakenings to reality. These experiences no longer allow for the status quo, but instead should propel us into tangible actions, actions that reflect the needs of the place we are in (p.1). These experiences should lead to the types of research and actions that are necessary for the place in which one is situated, and resonated with me on my own learning/unlearning journey in my home community of Nuxalk:

"…experiential, community-centred learning grounded in local cosmologies, languages, homelands, and facilitated by people rooted in their land, community, and culture" (Corntassel and Gaudry, 2014, p. 2).

I started this work because I care about my community. I live in an incredibly beautiful and spiritual place. It is also a place where there is a lot of pain from past injustices, all of which were committed on the land. My research collaborators have taught me that the land holds all of this, has always held all of this, that everything comes from and goes back to the land. Therefore, unless we understand the land and what happened to the land – and on the land – from the people who originate there, we are forever missing the most important part of our community.

Chapter 8: Conclusion
~ A Settler's Journey of Unlearning

"Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land"
(Thomas King, 2012).

It must be acknowledged that this was a very broad analysis of two governance systems that are very different in nature, incredibly complex, and constantly evolving. It was not a "deep dive" into the many layers of Nuxalk ancestral governance; it was a scan of the surface. This presented significant limitations, as the study needed to stay in scope whilst doing justice to the larger issues, such as land inequality, reconciliation, and community development, that the study intended to address. This study attempted to find some compatibility between two very diverse governance systems and, in that effort, opened up an entire universe of possibilities for further research.

This research study was but one small part of a long process of unlearning colonial systems and reinvigorating the original relationships with the land. These colonial systems, at least here in Nuxalk, are incredibly new. However, the detrimental effects of these systems on the land and its people will take time and dedication to reverse. Fortunately, there are dedicated people who are committed to returning to the laws the land requires in order to heal, and these laws are specific to that place. The research collaborators, while undertaking this task to examine Nuxalk governance in this relatively narrow scope, are fully aware that this work has no end date. That being said, the research collaborators agree that the most important next step is to practice Nuxalk governance in place. Research is one thing, and it is helpful, but it is not **doing.** It is through the doing that the next piece of the work will surface; it is not something that can be pre-determined at the research table, but rather requires its own time and space to reveal.

Overall, the principal contribution of this research is that Nuxalk, as a Sovereign entity, requires jurisdiction over land to implement their governance system; land cannot be separated from self-governance. It has also illustrated the importance of land repatriation and jurisdiction in colonial commitments to reconciliation, with the understanding that achieving reconciliation in communities supports healthy community development. Colonial institutions are aiming to accomplish reconciliation through processes such as DRIPA, but as this research has demonstrated, if the DRIPA Action Plan strays from its shared understandings of a distinctions-based and legally plural approach to Indigenous governance and all that it requires to be implemented, an example being Nuxalk's requirement for land, reconciliation may not be realized. At the community level, it means that the colonial policies that continue to perpetuate land inequality in places such as Nuxalk – the Bella Coola Valley – may not change. As a settler

this is unacceptable to me, and I will continue to advocate for meaningful alternatives that restore Nuxalk jurisdiction over their homelands.

On a personal level, I feel I have just started my journey of unlearning, even though I know it actually began 20 years ago when I first arrived here. I have often felt quite powerless, however, I now know that not to be true. I now understand that this is not "my" land and I do not refer to it as such. This is a fact I now share with people when they ask me questions about where I live, or the history of the property I "own." Sometimes it completely kills the conversation, sometimes it does not. My children, through witnessing the meetings held with the research collaborators at our home every month, also understand this land is not "theirs," and they understand why the issue of land here in Nuxalk is so important. They have been educated through this process to see things differently, and they will take that education with them into their relationships with others. This is how things change. I have often gone back to this quote from Arthur Manuel, "Before you have community participation, you must have community education…At the same time we have to educate Canadians on our rights and our demands and seek allies there. This is also essential." (p. 219). For this community, education is key. The more we (as settlers) commit to deep learning about the land we are on, the more you start to feel it.

Throughout this journey, learning about the extent of the pre-empted land here in Nuxalk has been a shock to me, but feeling it was something entirely different. Policies came alive. I began to feel how these policies of land dispossession have shaped lives for generations, including mine, and understood how they have been shaped to dominate, to exclude, and to wield power (Wiebe, 2020). At times I felt physically ill. I cried. I felt rage. I felt sadness. I continually wanted to look away, to disassociate from this colonial story. However, once you see it, this is not something you can "unsee." All I have to do is walk outside and it stares back at me every time. Wiebe's (2020) "sensing policy" framework allowed me to better understand how policies affect our lives every single day, that they are not simply words on a page, and that we need to understand and engage with policy in a different way. Community voices need to be heard, they need to be listened to, and those most directly affected by policies need to be the ones to author them. These policies are not benign, they have contributed to a myriad of community challenges that persist today, but there are options to move forward. As Wiebe (2020) says, "researchers and policymakers can play a role in amplifying voices, documenting stories, and co-creating outputs that have the potential to inform policy development" (p. 190).

In Nuxalk, understanding the past harms caused by stolen land, educating one another, and working together towards a more equitable jurisdiction of land are consistent with the tenets of both genuine community development and reconciliation. While it is just a beginning, it is my hope that this co-created knowledge will further contribute to Nuxalk jurisdiction over Nuxalk lands. As the research has shown, Nuxalk governance works, it has worked for thousands of years, and it will continue to work. "A deeply immersive and felt theory approach to the study of

power calls upon those who bear witness to community struggle to engage the senses and to listen" (Million (2013), in Wiebe 2020, p. 183). ***My call to my fellow settlers is this: it's time to listen, to learn, and to support. Way.***

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