

Wix̱an's 'Wi'la Ḵakutḻap̱a: let's learn together!

The beautiful chaos of family learning in ancestral language reclamation.

By

Ferrin Yola Willie

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

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Ferrin Yola Willie

Supervisory Committee

Dr. Onowa McIvor Whitinui, Supervisor
Department of Indigenous Education

Dr. Ewa Czaykowska-Higgins, Co-Supervisor
Department of Indigenous Education

Dr. Jean-Paul Restoule, Departmental Member
Department of Indigenous Education

Dr. Daisy Rosenblum, External Member
Department of Anthropology | Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies
University of British Columbia

Ame'x'id

(to become smaller)

Abstract

(concise summary of dissertation)

'Masi'da sinat (what is the purpose)? The purpose of this dissertation was to explore the journey of learning and reclaiming ancestral language as a household family.

Gwayi'le'las (our *Bakwam* ways of doing things) - The methodology used in this research was a study of myself in collaboration with *yudaxwan sasam* (my three children) focusing on *k'atla* (6) years of a simultaneous active *Bakwamkala* learning during my PhD program from 2019 to 2025. My work is an honoring of *Kwakwaka'wakw* ways of being and utilizing autoethnography, storying and storywork. I follow the *Tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron making process) as a framework for this dissertation and align each step with *Bakwamkala* concepts that encompass my research topics. This includes: 1) building a foundational base (*Alixwala* – preparing to leave on a journey), 2) Ties connecting *Tsep* to *li'laxwalli'laxwala* (loved ones) - (*Laxwe'gila* - gathering strength), 3) design related to family story (*Kakutlapa* (learning together) and *Sgnala* (to be whole), 4) personalized adornments (buttons, beads, bells etc. (*Ugwakala* - different), and 5) use of the *Tsep* in ceremony (*Hase' gaxan* – love gift/breath of life). I have also included: *kinamida kikatamakw* (many photos), *sapilabidu* (small movies/videos), dedications to each of *xan sasam* (my children) and the creation of ceremonial items as part of this research process.

Kaxdan (I found). Key findings/highlights - Despite the various challenges in learning and reclaiming an endangered coastal language it has proven to be an incredibly restorative experience for myself. While the longer-term impacts for *xan sasam* remain to be seen, there are

benefits already showing through *x̣gn saṣgm* and experienced by myself and others connected to this research. The biggest of these are the intergenerational healing benefits of reclaiming *x̣gn's*

Baḳwaṃkala.

Lutṣgṃd (to uncover something). Implications - based on this research, I observed and experienced the undertaking of reclaiming ancestral language as a worthwhile endeavour with many benefits for a family to learn collaboratively. It is the greatest source of *laxwe'gila* (strength gathering) I have experienced in my lifetime. I hope this research will contribute to the restoration and collective wellness of our nation and other Indigenous people and their languages.

Łaxẉalapạ li'laxẉala – love each other loved ones.

Ṭaxila

(making a pathway)

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Tsátsámxsila

(to direct, to show someone how to do something)

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Code-switching *dlu'wi kíkātā'makw* (with the photos)

In this dissertation I have included numerous *kíkātā'makw* documenting our *Bak'wamk'ala* learning journey for nearly a decade. In the *kíkātā'makw* descriptions I have chosen to use our *Bak'wamk'ala* supplementing with english as needed. This is a purposeful demonstration of mixing languages as a learning strategy. I have also done my best to put the phrases together according to the flow of our *Bak'wamk'ala* but there may be better ways to do so. I have provided a separate glossary of terms to accompany the *kíkātā'makw*.

Ƙakutlan xan Bak'wamk'ala - Kwakwala...Dza'wala

(learning I am my ancestral language - Kwakwala...Dza'wala)

Throughout my dissertation I will refer to my ancestral language as either *Bak'wamk'ala* and/or *Kwakwala*. It might seem that I use these references interchangeably but that is not my intention. When I began my learning journey, I understood our language to be called *Kwakwala* and that is what I called it for many years. Recently I have shifted to using *Bak'wamk'ala* as it is an inclusive term for all our language groups or “dialects” amongst our nation. *Bak'wam* refers to a human being and/or Indigenous person and is how our people often refer to ourselves and *Bak'wamk'ala* would be the language we speak as *Bak'wam* or Indigenous people. *Kwakwala* is derived from the *Kwagu'l*, one of our language groups/people in our nation and one that I am connected to and would be a dialect reference. *Kwakwala* is the most prominent dialect and reference amongst our nation, but we also have other dialects. *Xan sasamanixw* attend school *lax Ts'algwadi* (Tsulquate) where they are learning *Gwatsala* and *'Nakwala*. I have *li'laxwal* working hard in their respective communities to rejuvenate their dialects of *Gutsa* in *Xwatis* (Quatsino)

and *Lik'wala* in *Tłamataxw* (Campbell River). I also recently learned that the language of our *Dzawadq'enuxw* can be referred to as *Dzq'wala*.



Figure 1: *Dzawali* (the sound of the robin), the name of our *Dzawadq'enuxw* people refers to this. I have recently learned our dialect could be referred to as *Dzq'wala*. This image encapsulates my desire to speak *Dzq'wala* and/or *Dzawali* (the sound of the robin), the language of our *Dzawadq'enuxw* people. *Katq'makwila'inuxw* - Kris G. Brownlee. *Katq'makwinuxw* - Yola, 2025.

Glossary *kə'e kíkata'makw* (for photos)

Dligam (name[s])

Mixala – to dream (Calai's middle name, *xan nakagawe ma'yudlami* - my middle child)

Na'yi - fallen snow (Emaeya's middle name, *xan galama'yudlami* - my first born)

San'yas - clever/creative/knowledgeable (*xan alxste' ma'yudlami* - my last born)

Yola – wind (my middle name that I most often go by currently)

Sasgm (my children) references

Alxste' - last

Galma'yudlami - first born

Ma'yudlam(i) - born

Nakagawe - middle

'Namyut (family) references

Abamp - mom

Du'li'gas - niece

Egas - girl's friend

Gagas - grandmother

Sasgm - one's own children

Sasgamanixw - one's own small children

Ump - dad

Wak'wa - sibling of opposite sex

Wa'yugwamala - baby

Xw̱anukw - one's own child

Nugwa'am (I am), self and other references

Dlu'w̱an - with/and my

Dlu'wis - with/and his/her

Nugwa'am - I am

X̱an - my

X̱is - his/her

Connector *walḏam* (word[s])

Ḵa'e - for

Lax - at

Laxa - at the

Awi'nakola (lands, waters, sky)

Aṯi - forest

Nage - mountain

Ṯama'is – beach

Awi'nagwis (lands along the waters), village sites

Ḏaksiwe' - *Kwagu'l* site near *'Nalaxstala* - south facing, Port McNeill, “silverweed at mouth of the river,” *dlax* (referring to pacific silverweed plant) and *'siwe'* (mouth of the river)

Gwa'dzi' - Ancestral *Kwagu'l* village, river and estuary, Port Hardy, “big flow from the upper end”

Snuneymuxw - Nanaimo

Tayagut - Story's beach near *Tsaxis*, Fort Rupert

Tsaxis - main current village of the *Kwagu'l*, Fort Rupert, translated by Franz Boas and George Hunt as “stream running on beach”

Ukwānalis - main current village of the *Dzawada'enuxw*, it was shared with me long ago this refers to the crescent bend of the land along the river

I'ugwākala (all different), other terms

Alumas - new

Bakwine' - spirit

Bawikw - pregnant

Gagisama - jelly fish

Kadukw - book

Kakutla - learning

Kas'ane' - shirt

Ku'mis – crab

Noke' – heart/mind

Tistakwa - earrings

Tlastakw - sea kelp

'wale' - passed

Xala'is – shell

Dli'dlugwe' (treasured possessions), ceremonial items/terms

Gagaləm - ermine

Gaxalitso - “coming through” reference to coming-of-age ceremony for girls becoming women

Gabəm - button (*Gi'gabəm* - buttons)

Hamsqml - supernatural bird mask held as sacred and used in ceremony

Tsep - ceremonial dance apron (*Tsitsep* - ceremonial dance aprons)

Tla'yala - beads

Yayaxwsgm - *chilkat* regalia, *chilkat* style originates from our northern *Tlingit* and *Haida* family connections (other northern groups use this *chilkat* style as well), the word *chilkat* originates from the *Tlingit* language - *tcil-xat* “storehouses for salmon” (google search)

Yakandas (your language), references for our ancestral language

Bakwamkala – language of *Bakwam* (Indigenous) people, the term I have recently been using mostly to refer to our language

Kwakwala - most prominent dialect of our language group, the term of reference I first knew for our ancestral language, a dialect originating from the *Kwagu'l*

Dza'wala - language of the *Dzawada'enuxw* people

Bibaxwas (people), groupings of *Bakwam*/nations

Kumuxs'i - Comox (near Courtney on Vancouver Island)

Kwagu'l - the *Bakwam* people whose current main village site is *Tsaxis* - Fort Rupert

Kwakwakw'wakw - a reference for the *Kwakwala* speaking peoples

Kákutla wiwaldam dlu'wi kíkata'makw (learning words/phrases to go with pictures)

Abamp - mom/mother

A'ekakila. - take care

Alixwala - preparing to leave on a journey

Alumus wa'yugwamala - new baby (*alumas* - new, *wa'yugwamala* - baby)!

Amlux da tsatsadagam laxa tlama'is. - playing is the little girl on the beach (*amla* - play, *Amlux* - playing is (visible), *da* - the, *tsatsadagam* - little girl, *laxa* - on/at the, *tlama'is* - beach)

Angwux da? - who is that, near/close by (visible)

Ax'atlahuda's xus hamsamt. - put on your supernatural bird mask (*Ax'atlahuda's* - put on (command), *xus* - your, *hamsamt* - supernatural bird mask)

Ax'atlahuda's xus tsep. - put on your dance apron (*Ax'atlahuda's* - put on (command), *xus* - your, *tsep* - dance apron)

A'yapkas - having fun

Bakwalalux da Wa'yugwamala. - sleepy is the baby (*bakwalala* - sleepy, *Bakwalalux* - sleepy is (visible), *da* - the, *Wa'yugwamala* - baby)

Ba'ni'sta - moving down

Da'la laxa Hase' - hold on to the breath of life (*da'la* - hold, *laxa* - to the, *Hase'* - breath of life)

Dantsam - cedar bark hat

Danxalan - singing I am! (*danxala* - singing, *an* - I am)

Danxalan's laxa tlama'is - singing we are to the beach (*danxalan's* - singing we are, *laxa* - at the, *tlama'is* - beach)

Danxalatlan's - sing will we all/we are all going to sing (*danxala* - sing, *tan's* - will we all/we will (inclusive))

Dlugwe' - treasure

Dukwala gaxan - looking at me

Dukwala'mase xa hasdaqala'yu? - do you see the breath to live (*dukwala* - see, 'mase - do you, *xa* - the, *hasdaqala'yu* - breathing tool, reason for breathing, breath to live, *hasdaqala* - breath/breathing, 'yu- tool)

Duxw'ida's xan kas'ane' - look at my shirt (*duxw'ida's* - look at (command), *xan* - my, *kas'ane'* - shirt)

Dzawali – sound of the robin

Gagisama - jellyfish

Galgapola - holding hands/upholding each other

Gaxw'ida's xa tsep. - hang up the dance apron (*gaxw'ida's* - hang up (command), *xa* - the, *tsep* - dance apron)

Gayutlan laxa atli. - I come from the forest (*gayutlan* - come from I am/I come from, *laxa* – the, *atli* - forest)

Gilakas'la bakwila'enuxw ka'eda 'nala tsoweyus gaxan's - thank you creator for this life you have given us (*gilakas'la* - thank you, *bakwila'enuxw* - creator/spirit expert, *ka'eda* - for the, 'nala - life, *tsoweyus* - given to, *gaxan's* - us)

Gilakas xan tlaxan wi'ump. - thanks I give to my ancestors/I give thanks to my ancestors (*gilakas* - thanks, *xan* - my, *tlaxan* - to my, *wi'ump* - ancestors)

Hamkwas- crouched on the ground

Hamsamala - dancing the hamsamł (supernatural bird mask)

Ha'nal'la - keep going/doing what you're doing/keep on!

Hwakwasola - siblings

Hawa'x'ala k̄amd̄am – prayer song (*hawa'x'ala* – to pray/praying, *k̄amd̄am* – song)

Ikan noke' kas - my heart/mind is happy from you/you make my heart/mind happy (*ik* – good/happy, *an* - my, *noke'* - heart/mind, *kas* - you)

Ikt̄sḡm - abalone shell

Ix'akan t̄lax̄a dz̄alxw'i - I like to run (*ix'ak* - like, *an* - I, *t̄lax̄a* - to, *dz̄alxw'i* - run)

K̄abik̄ala - tortoise/turtle (refers to the shell)

K̄akad̄axwsila - to read or reading

K̄akad̄axwsilan - reading I am (*k̄akad̄axwsila* - reading, *an* - I am)

K̄akad̄axwsilas - reading you are (*k̄akad̄axwsila* - reading, *as* - you are)

K̄akad̄axwsilat̄las - read you will (*k̄akad̄axwsila* - read/reading, *t̄las* - you will/are going to)

K̄akut̄la'mas Kwak'wale - learning are you Kwak'wala (*k̄akut̄la* - learn/learning, *'mas* - are you,

Kwak'wale/Kwak'wala - dialect originating from the *Kwagu't*)

K̄akut̄la'man Kwak'wale - learning I am Kwak'wala (*k̄akut̄la* - learn/learning, *'man* - I am)

Kwak'wale/Kwak'wala - dialect originating from the *Kwagu't*

K̄akut̄lan - learning I am (*k̄akut̄la* - learn/learning, *an* - I am)

K̄akut̄lan's - learning are we all (*k̄akut̄la* - learning, *an's* - we all are (inclusive))

K̄a'tse - carrying a baby in your arms

K̄alk̄axstala - wearing a diaper

Kas'i lax̄ kayas sesa k̄walsk̄wal'yakw 'wate' - walk in the path of our ancestors (*kas'i* - walk, *lax̄* - in the, *kayas* - path, *sesa* - of our, *k̄walsk̄wal'yakw* - old people, *'wate'* - passed)

Kasux̄ da ḡnan̄ngas lax̄a t̄lama'is - walking is the girl on the beach (*kasa* - walk, *kasux̄* - walking is (visible), *da* - the, *ḡnan̄ngas* - girl, *lax̄a* - on the, *t̄lama'is* - beach)

Kwak'wala kikas'ane' - Kwak'wala shirts (*Kwak'wala* - dialect of the *Kwagu'l*, *kas'ane'* - shirt, *kikas'ane'* - plural)

K'wala, Laxwa, Da'ta - live, love, laugh

K'wax'id - to wink (or turn on a light)

K'wisux da 'nalax - snowing it is today! (*k'wisa* - snow falling, *k'wisux* - snowing it is (visible), *da* - the, *'nalax* - day (visible))

Labalisatḻan laxw̱ala'nukw̱anthus. - I will love you forever (*labalisatḻan* - forever I will, *laxw̱ala* - love, *'nukw̱an* - have I, *thus* - you)

Lalax'sola - passage through life (example is the coming-of-age ceremony)

La'm̱an galaḇanda - I am starting! (*la'm̱an* - I am, *galaḇanda* - starting)

Laṯan laxi kaḵuṯa'as - going I am to school (*Laṯan* - going I am, *laxi* - to, *kaḵuṯa'as* - learning place/school)

Lawida's xus ẖams̱am̱t - take off your supernatural bird mask (*Lawida's* - take off, *xus* - your, *ẖams̱am̱t* - supernatural bird mask)

Luxw̱am - round face

Ḻaṉxa, is̱ula, ṯlaḵwa dhu' m̱ala - green, black, red/copper and white

Laxwe'gila - gathering strength (*laxwa* - strength/love, *gila* - making)

Laxw̱ala'nukw̱anthus. - love have I for you/I love you (*laxw̱ala* - love/loved one, *nukw̱an* - have I, *thus* - for you)

Laxw̱ala'nukw̱anṯlas̱an 'naxwa sas̱ma. - love I have for my children (*laxw̱ala* - love/loved one, *'nukw̱an* - have I, *ṯlas̱an* - for my, *'naxwa* - all, *sas̱m(a)* - children)

Laxw̱alapa - love each other (*laxw̱ala* - love/loved one, *pa* - each other)!

Laxw̄layu'wida wi'yuḡamala. - loved is the baby (*laxw̄layu* - love/loved one/reason for love, *'wida* - is the, *wi'yuḡamala* - baby)

'Ma'mu'lak̄wala - thank you song

'Mats̄alis dugw̄alq'os? - what do you see (*'mats̄alis* - what do, *dugw̄alq'os* - see you/you see)?

'Mats̄ali gada? - what is this (*'mats̄ali* - what is, *gada* - this, right here/holding)

'Mats̄alux? - what is that (over there)

M̄axa - punch

M̄axap̄a - punching each other, boxing (*m̄axa* - punch, *p̄a* - each other)

Maya'x̄ala x̄an's q̄wi'nakola - respect for our lands, waters, sky (*maya'x̄ala* - respect, *x̄an's* - our, *q̄wi'nakola* - lands, waters, sky)

Mits̄a - kiss

Mixux da w̄a'yugw̄amala- sleeping is the baby (*mixux* - sleep, *mixux* - sleeping is (visible), *da* - the, *w̄a'yugw̄amala* - baby)

Mu'l̄an t̄asa at̄li. - grateful I am for the forest (*mu'la* - grateful, *an* - I am, *t̄asa* - for the, *at̄li* - forest, away from beach)

Mu'l̄an t̄asa q̄wi'nagwis. - grateful I am for the lands along the waters (*mu'la* - grateful, *an* - I am, *t̄asa* - for the, *q̄wi'nagwis* - lands along the waters)

Mu'l̄an t̄asa q̄wi'nakola - grateful I am for the lands, waters & sky (*mu'la* - grateful, *an* - I am, *t̄asa* - for the, *q̄wi'nakola* - lands, waters, sky)

N̄awila - telling stories of our ancestors

N̄axw'anala - wearing a blanket

Nugwa'am - I am

Nusa - tell a story

O'am hayulis gwalala - I am always ready (*O'am* - I am (?), *hayulis* - always, *gwalala* - ready)

Osam - resembles father

Palamx'idas - close your eyes (command)

Su'am ika'mas xan noke' la'e anudzulis ida ik.' - you make me happy when skies are grey (*Su'am* - you, *ika'mas* - happy you, *xan* - my, *noke'* - heart/mind, *anudzulis* - grey clouds, *ida* - in the, *ik'* - sky/up high)

Su'man hasdaqala'yu. - you are my reason for breathing (*su'man* - you are my, *hasdaqala'yu* - reason for breathing, *hasdaqala* - breath/breathing, *yu* - tool)

Su'man Kwala'yu. - you are my reason for living (*su'man* - you are my, *Kwala'yu* - reason for living, *kwala* - life/living, *yu* - tool)

Su'man taxwala'yu - you are my reason for love (*su'man* - you are my, *taxwala'yu* - reason for loving, *taxwala* - love/loved one, *yu* - tool)

Su'man tisala - you are my sunshine (*su'man* - you are my, *tisala* - sun/sunshine, *as* - you)

Tistakwa - earrings

Tlakwa - copper/red

T'aliwe' - to forget

Tlatlagwanu'dze' - stand with hands on hips

Tla'yala - bead(s)

Tla'yalan - beading I am (*tla'yala* - bead(s), *an* - I am)

Tla'wo - oh my/how beautiful

Tsamx'ida's tlaxa tlastlakw - point to the sea kelp (*tsamx'ida's* - point (command), *tlaxa* - to the, *tlastlakw* - sea kelp)

Tsas'id - stretch

Ts'as'idas xus a'ya'su - stretch your hand/arm (*ts'as'id* - stretch, *xus* - your, *a'ya'su* - hand/arm)

Ts'as'kwana - songbird

Ts'ats'a'yasola - siblings of the same sex

Tsep'i'sala - dance apron wearing/wearing a dance apron

Tsep'isala'mida ts'adaḱ - dance apron wearing is the woman (*tsep* - dance apron, *isala'mida* - wearing is the, *ts'adaḱ* - woman)

Tsitsep - dance aprons

Uya, amhux da gangananam (slow, playing are the children/slow, children are playing, *uya* - slow, *amla* - play/*amhux* - playing are (visible), *da* - the, *gangananam* - children)

'Walas laxw'alapux da gangananamx - big love for each other the children have/the children really love each other (*'walas* - big, *laxw'alapux* - love for each other (visible), *da* - the, *gangananamx* - children (visible)).

'Wa'wasdamtlan kw'alal, suxse'amtlan wa'yugwamalal - As long as you're living, my baby you will be (*'Wa'wasdamtlan* - as long as you're, *kw'alal* - living, *suxse'amtlan* - you will be my, *wa'yugwamalal* - baby)

Wawalkinala (receiving a gift)

'Wel'mida i'a'ya'su? - what can do the hands do (*'wel'mida* - what can do the, *i'a'ya'su* - hands)

'Widas gayuthi? - where are you from (*'widas* - where, *gayuthi* - are you from)

Wiga'o'amx! - just do it!

'Wiga'xan's yak'antalape - let us all speak together (*wiga* - let, *xan's* - us, *yak'antalape* - speak together)

'Wiga'xan's 'wi'la kak'utlapa - let us all learn together (*wiga* - let, *xan's* - us, *'wi'la* - all, *kak'utlapa* - learn together)

'Wi'lamān's sasam laxwala nugwa. - all our children are loved by us (*'wi'lamān's* - all our, *sasam* - one's own children, *laxwala* - love/loved one, *nugwa* - by us)

'Wi'lamānuḡw gayutl laxa atli. - we all come from the forest (*'wi'lamānuḡw* – we all (exclusive), *gayutl* - come from, *laxa* - in the, *atli* - forest)

Wina - warrior

'Wi'stuwux? - what color is this (visible)

Wixān's amla! - let's play (*wixān's* - let's, *amlā* - play)

Wixān's kasa'ida! - let's go for a walk (*wixān's* - let's go, *kasa* – walk, *kas'ida* – for a walk)

Wixān's 'wi'la kakutlapa! - let's learn together (*wixān's* - let's, *'wi'la* - all, *kakutla* - learn, *pa* – together)

Wi'xusto gaxān's - lift up each other

Xalpida's - turn around (command)

Xasa - lost

Ya'winuxwida hamsamala - the dancer in the *hamsam* is a good dancer (*ya'winuxwida* - good dancer is the, *hamsamala* - *hamsam* (supernatural bird mask) dancer)

A'yu'sala

(to understand)

Glossary

Ada – endearing term for an older female and often used to refer to a grandmother

Al'xste' ma'yudlami – last born

Alixwala – preparing to go on a journey

Amusa – decoration

Abamp – mom/mother

Akala – fish jumping out of water

Amabidu – small

Ame'xid – to become smaller

Angwa – who are you?

Anis – Aunt

Awi'nagwis – lands by the water ('is' ending indicates by water)

Ax'exsdanuxwex kwalesanuxw Kwakwala – we want our *Kwakwala* to live

Babagwam – boy (*Bibabagwam* – boys)

Bagwanam – man (*bibagwanam* – men)

Bakwam – human being/indigenous person/how our people refer to themselves

Bakwamkala – the language of our *Bakwam* people

Bakwamxtle' – *Bakwam* name

Bakwine' – spirit

Dlaksiwe – *Kwagu'l* site near *Nalaxstala* (south facing), Port McNeill

Dtixs'ala – lovingly lecture

Dligam – a/your/my name

Dlu' – and

Dlugwe' – treasure (*dli'dlugwe'* – treasures)

Dlu'li'gas – niece

Dut'a/Duda – a *Bakwamkala* name of our last monolingual speaker

Dzunuk'wa – wild woman of the woods

Egas – female friend to a female

Ga'agamp – grandparents

Gagamp – grandfather

Gagas – grandmother

Gagas'wale' – grandmother passed (*Gigagas'wale'* – grandmothers who have passed)

Galma'yudlami – first born

Ganal'ge' – last child

Ga'yagas – eye (*giga'yagas* – eyes)

Gilakas'la qwi'nagwis – thank you lands along the waters

Gukwdzi – bighouse

Gwa'dzi' – *Kwagu'l* ancestral lands, town also known as Port Hardy

Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw – two interconnected *Bakwam* peoples whose main current community is *Ts'algwadi* next to *Gwa'dzi'* (Port Hardy)

Gwa'yi – river *lax Ukw'qanalis* (in Kingcome Inlet)

Haitzaqv – the *Bakwam* people of *Wag'lisla* also known as Bella Bella

Haitzaqvla – the language of the *Haitzaqv* people

Hamsqml – supernatural bird mask danced in ceremony

Hamsqamala – supernatural bird masked dance

Kakutlamas – teacher

Kalugwis – Turnour Island

Kangextola – button blanket used in ceremony

Kas'ane' – shirt (*kikas'ane'* – shirts)

Kíkás'u – family treasures (*pása*/ceremonial)

Kúmugwe' – chief of the undersea world, 'wealthy one'

Kwagu'l – the *Bakwam* peoples whose current main community is *Tsaxis* (Fort Rupert)

Kwáli' – uncle



Figure 2: *Galgapola* (holding hands/upholding each other).

Nugwa'am Yola, bəwíkw dhu'wi C. Mixála, holding hands dhu'wən galma'yudłami E. Na'yi lax Tayagut tłama'is, Katq'makwinuxw - Tłitli'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Kwakwaka'wakw – a reference to the *Kwakwala* speaking peoples

Kwakwala – the language of the *Kwagu'l* people, the most prominent dialect of the

Kwakwaka'wakw

Kwála'yu– life tool, reason for living, term of endearment for our children

Kwál'yakwaga'yi – eldest

Kwigwis – sea eagle (name of the daycare in *Tsaxis*)

La'maṅ dulo – I won

La'maṅ's dulo – we are winning (inclusive)

Lax – in/to

Luxwsam – round

Luxwam – round face

Lutsamd – to uncover something

Laxwala – loved one

Laxwala k'amdam ka'eda awi'nagwis – love song for the lands/waters, lands by the waters

Laxwala'nukwanthus – love I have for you (I love you)

Laxwe'gila – strength gathering/building

Li'laxwal – loved ones

Ma'l – two

'Ma'makwayu – calendar

Mayatan – regretful I am (sorry)

Mayaxala – respect (concept/way of being)

Ma'yutla – giving birth

Malkwala – to remember

Mangas – bum

Mangas xwa 'nalax – bum (to) day (a phrase coined by *Saṅ'yas*, not grammatically correct)

Mu'la – grateful (*mu'lan* – grateful I am)

Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw – Grouping of four tribes of the *Dzawada'enuxw*

Mixala – to dream (my second daughter's middle name, the name I use when speaking to her in our *Bakwamkala*)

Mowachut – a *Bakwam* peoples of the *Nuuchahnuulh*

Nagayu – middle child

Nakagawe' ma'yudlami – reference to middle born

'Nalaxstala – facing south, village (name of the town of Port McNeill)



Figure 3: *Mu'lan tlasa atli* (grateful I am for the forest).
Nugwa'am Yola lax Tayagul atli. Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

'Nqm – one

'Nqngis – the *Bakwam* peoples whose current main community is *'Yqlis* (Alert Bay)

Nawalakw – supernatural

Na'yi – fallen snow (my eldest daughter's middle name, the name I use when speaking to her in our *Bakwamkala*)

'Nqmyut – family

Nanwakola – to put our hearts and minds (*noke'*) together to find solutions

Noke' – heart and mind

Noxsola – wise one (*No'noxsola/Ni'noxsola* - wise ones)

Nugwa'am – I am

'Nula – older sibling of the same sex

Nusux – mine

Nuuchahnulth – the *Bakwam* peoples along the westcoast of vancouver island

Nuyam – story

Osam – resembles father

Pasa – potlatch

Sanala – to be whole

San'yas – clever/creative, knowledgeable 'you know' (my youngest child/son's name)

Sasam – one's own children

Sasam_{anu}'xw – one's own children, smaller (how I refer to my younger two)

Snuneymuxw – Nanaimo

Taxila - making a pathway (trail)

Tlamka – proud

Thisalagi'lakw – sun maker, born to be son of the sun, coming from the sun (name of the elementary community school *lax 'Yalis*, also one of my eldest daughter's *Bakwamxtle'*)

Tlipid – to pull foreskin back

Thus – you

Tsamas– Victoria, reference to pointing

Tsatsamxsila - to direct, to show someone how to do something

Tsaxis – village of the *Kwagu'l* people, also known as Fort Rupert

Ts'algwadi – village of the *Gwa'sala* and *'Nakwaxda'xw* people, next to *Gwa'dzi'* (Port Hardy)

Tsep – dance apron

Tsitsa'nikala – cute

Tsitsuxwtlama – grandchildren

Ugwakala – different

Ukw'analís – name of our *Dzawada'enuxw* village, also known as Kingcome Inlet, BC

Ukwine'' – body

Ump'wale' – father passed

Wáglis!a – the current community of the *Haitzaqv*, also known as Bella Bella

Wak'wa – sibling

Wagalus – rainbow (name of the elementary community school *lax Tsaxis*)

'Walas – big

'wiga'xan's 'wi'la kakut!apa – let us learn together!

'wiga'xan's yakantalape – let us speak together!

'Wiksas xwa 'nalax – how is your day?

Xan – my

Xan's – our (inclusive, all of us including you/the person you are talking to)

Xandzas – nose

Xus – your

Xwakwana – canoe

Yagwam – gift/present given at a *pasa*

Yakwima – gift received at a *pasa*

'Yalis – community of the *'Namgis* people, also known as Alert Bay

Yudq̄xw – three

Malkwala

(to remember)

I dedicate my dissertation to my late brother Dennis Micheal Gladstone – *Mayaxilid/Gayutla'as* who died of an overdose, an impact of colonial genocide, on October 30, 2023, at the age of 35. My brother once told me, “We all have our addictions; you going to school is an addiction.” At the time I was annoyed with his words but in some ways he was right. My PhD endeavour had everything to do with making space for learning my language and the journey has similar attributes to that of addiction. Language learning has its highs and lows and everything in between, but it is one that keeps me motivated for life: it is life-giving and keeps me earthside. My hope is to encourage others to take up the reclamation¹ of our ancestral languages as part of our collective healing. Our *Bakwamkala* is addiction and suicide prevention. The restoration of our languages is integral to our intergenerational healing. There is nothing I wish for more than for our *Bakwam* people to thrive!

I have recently incorporated this prayer song into our household and sing and drum it to start our day first thing in the morning with our deck sliding door open facing the ocean and sunrise.

While singing I envision the healing of our people as connected to the restoration of our language and sing each part 3 times for each of *xan's sasam*.

¹ This alternate spelling is intentional. The word “reclaim” better fits the spirit of my work, and the conventional spelling re-clam-ation reminds me of the English name for one of our food sources.

***Kwagu't* prayer to the rising sun ***

La'amtlan's tla'yugwalisayasutł sa
Hixalisayasutł san's a'iki Gigama'ya
Kiyosalalan'slatł li'łaxwtsolagałis gan'slatł gan's
Hixalisayasutł san's a'iki Gigama'ya
Gilakas'la a'iki Gigama'ya

It is said we shall be changed on earth by
the one that comes down to set the world right our Chief above.
Nothing for us will be difficult on earth for us when we are set right by the
one that comes down our Chief above.
Thank you, our Chief, above.²

² Ancient lyrics recorded in Franz Boas texts, such as *Ethnology of the Kwakiutl* (1921), and used by our community today (no source cited by Boas).



Figure 4: *Osgm* (to look like your father).
Waḱwa'wāle' Dennis dlu'wis ḡwanukw Brooklyn, Ḷatā'makwinuxw - Waḱwa'wāle' Dennis, 2023

Dennis Micheal Gladstone joined us earthside on April 30, 1988, and left us on October 30, 2023, at the age of 35. He was born in his *Haitzaqv* community of *Wáglisla* (Bella Bella), passed on in *'Naldzi* (Vancouver), and was lovingly brought home to his *Dzawada'enuxw* village of *Ukwánalis* (Kingcome Inlet) for burial on November 10, 2023. Dennis was the son of the late *Ha'emzit*, David Gladstone, of the *Yisdaitxv*, *Haitzaqv* and Emily Willie of the *Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw*, *Kwikwasutinuxw* & *Kwagu'l*, *wakwa* (brother) to Ferrin “Yola”, Tracy Anne, 'nula (older brother) to Damian “Toby”, *ump* (father) to Brooklynn, *k'wali'* (uncle) to Emaeya, Calai and San'yas, 'wayas (sweetheart/partner) to Gina, and a *taxwala* (loved one) to many from our *Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw* and *Haitzaqv* nations. Dennis carried the name *Gwayutlalas* from his *Musgamakw* side, *Mayalili* & *Qisgamxtu* from his *Haitzaqv* side. He was initiated as a *matsa* by his *Musgamakw* family, a *Hmsmzis* and *Hailikala* by his *Haitzaqv* family and expressed these ceremonial dances beautifully. Dennis lived in both of his ancestral communities of *Wáglisla* and *Ukwánalis* as well as *Tsamas*(Victoria) and *'Naldzi* (Vancouver), with the latter being the location where he spent most of his adult years. Dennis was a crane rigger, a poet, a writer, a rapper, a laugher, a joker, a charismatic character, a soccer player, and a frog hunter to name some aspects of his being. He was an incredibly proud father to Brooklynn whom he loved tremendously. Dennis brought a lot of *K'wala* – life, *Laxwa* – love, & *Da'la* – laughter into the lives of those he connected with. His earthside presence will be missed greatly. *Halakas'la* – goodbye, my (our) breath goes with you...

Wixan's 'Wi'la K'akut'apa!

(let's learn together)

The beautiful chaos of family learning in ancestral language reclamation



Figure 5: *Ax'at'gluda's xus hamsaml* (put on your supernatural bird mask).
Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wan sasam tying *hamsaml* on to *San'yas lax Tayagul awi'nagwis*,
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberly Kufaas, 2025

Ola ikaṇ noḳe' gaxakus

Su'maṇ k'wala'yuxwoḵ

Su'maṇ hasdaḵala'yuxwoḵ

He'maṇ xwanuxwoḵ



Figure 6: *Alumas Wa'yugwamala* (new baby)!
San'yas as a newborn *dlu'wis* sisters *C. Mixala* (left) & *E. Na'yi* (right),
Katq'makwinuxw - K. Photography, 2018

My heart is really happy you have come to me
You are my reason for living

You are my reason for breathing

You are my child

Gayutł - Waxawidi, William Wasden Jr.

Wixan's galabaṇda!

(Let us begin)

Introduction



Figure 7: *Gilakas'la Bakwila'enuxw k̄a'eda 'nala tso 'weyus gaṣan's*
(thank you creator for this life you have given us).
Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wan sasam & Saṇ'yas dlu'wis hamsam! lax Tayagut atli,
Kat̄a'makwinuxw - Tli'li 'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Gilakasda'xw'la k̄i'laxwa! Nugwa'am Yola.

Ga'maṇ sasam Na'yi, Mixala dlu' Saṇ'yas.

Gayutlan lax Ukwanalis, Tsaxis dlu' Wágísla,

Dzawadaxsa'maṇ, Kwagu'ł axsa'maṇ, Haítzaqvaxsa'maṇ.

Gukwalaṇ lax Gwa'dzi', awi'nagwises sa Kwagu'ł.

Kakutlan xan Bakwamkala dlu'wan sasam.

Ax'exsdaṇuxwex Kwalesanukwex Bakwamkala!

Greetings loved ones! I am *Yola* (wind).

These are my children *Na'yi* (fallen snow), *Mixala* (to dream), and *San'yas*
(clever/creative).

I am from Kingcome Inlet, Fort Rupert and Bella Bella.

I am a *Dzawada'enuxw*, *Kwagu't*, *Haítzaqv* woman.

I live in Port Hardy, the ancestral lands of the *Kwagu't*.

I am learning my ancestral language with my children.

We want our language to live!

I chose this doctoral path to make space for learning *xan's Bakwamkala*. A journey that began as language learning and inevitably transformed into one of reclamation. I am intentionally using “reclamation” and not “reclamation” as we are a people who make use of clams as a food source and when I see “reclamation” I hear “clam.”

In my dissertation I will share about my personal reclamation journey in connection to *xan sasam*. It will follow the flow of *tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron creation): 1) building a foundational base related to *Alixwala* (preparing to leave on a journey), 2) ties connecting the *Tsep* to *li'laxwala* (loved ones) and aligning this with *Laxwe'gila* (gathering strength), 3) design related to family story connected to *Kakutlapa* (learning together) and *Sgnala* (to be whole) 4) personalized adornments (buttons, beads, bells etc.) in relation to *Ugwakala* (different), and 5) use of the *Tsep* in ceremony as part of *Hase' gaxan* (love gift/breath of life). It contains this written piece with many beautiful photos and videos capturing our *Bakwamkala* journey over nine years. Lastly, and most meaningful to my *noke'* it includes three dedications to *xan sasam* where I speak to each of them acknowledging them for their part in this family work. I share

their birth and naming stories, and about their *Bak'wamk'ala* journey with me and our household. These dedications accompany photos of the ceremonial pieces created for each of them as part of my dissertation. The *hamsaml* was commissioned for *San'yas* and the *tsi'tsep* were created for *Na'yi & Mixgla* by me with support from *li'laxwql*. This dissertation has been crafted for family and community and the hope to inspire and encourage *xan's li'laxwql* with reclaiming *xan's Bak'wamk'ala* as part of our collective healing and wellness. *'Wi'laman's mans'ida's* - let's all try!

Gatinuxw

(good artist, one who makes things well)

In this dissertation I am expressing artistic flair in my use of formatting, different fonts, spacing, centering and left aligned, no chapter numbering, etc. I have chosen to use lower case characters for some words that would normally be standardized, such as facebook, youtube, covid, and others. The purpose is to deemphasize their importance, to keep the focus on *Bak'wamk'ala*. I have also used centered text throughout - in places where it just felt right. These passages felt more like 'snapshots' of our journey. Some things are written in active form such as, "I would like to sing" followed by a youtube link – intentionally bringing life to this written piece sharing the beautiful chaos of our household journey of reclaiming our ancestral language.

A group of educational researchers have been exploring alternative dissertation formats for the past few years (Anderson et al., 2022). They studied over 1,000 education-based dissertations and sorted them into various categories. One of these was 'topic-based' dissertations described as, "[r]eports on a variety of "subtopics" (but not separate research studies) under the central research topic ... These subtopics are typically organized as distinct

interior chapters, with separate introductory and concluding chapters” (Anderson et al., 2020, p. 4). Further, topics-based dissertation dissertations designs “were disproportionately used by doctoral writers in education-based disciplines informed by arts-based inquiry, women’s and gender studies, Indigenous studies, poetic inquiry, and literary fields” and expressed that “this dissertation structure allowed authors ... to express their research and voices in ways that resisted the confines of ‘traditional’ empirical research and the traditional dissertation structure.” I found their research useful in thinking about my dissertation and how important it felt to be presented in an artistic way. In this spirit, I hope you can sit back and enjoy the journey ahead.

He'am gweli

(that's life)

Shift in family structure over course of doctoral program

Introductory video for Indigenous language revitalization doctoral program:

<https://youtu.be/Je1GX0G3K1I?si=hRZocDx0flyFHojS>



Figure 8: *Nugwa'am abgmp Yola* embracing *Sgn'yas dlu'wi E. Na'yi* beside me.

In starting this doctoral journey, I submitted this short introductory video highlighting the beautiful chaos of family life and the beginnings of this profound journey in ancestral language reclamation. We were a family of five, with our bonus child *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, living *laxa Snuneymuxw* at the time over six years ago and now as I complete my dissertation, I am a mostly solo parent of my three living and learning *lax Gwa'dzi' He'am gweli* – that's life... It was a beautiful time for our family living and learning *laxa Snuneymuxw* during covid times and I will always cherish this. Upon return to our homelands our family structure shifted, and I have mostly been on my own with *xan sasam*. This has been a challenging transition, but I am grateful to the ongoing uplifting I receive from this reclamation journey.

Hayulisqn mu'la ka'an's Bakwamkala

(always grateful for our language)

Ikamtli

(it will be ok)

Hana'lqn

(I will keep going)

Laxwalapa Ei'laxwal

(love each other loved ones)



Figure 9: *Gagas'wale'* Emily (Scow) Willie who as a young woman created the *tsep* providing a foundation and inspiration in this dissertation. *K'ikatq'makw'inuḱw* - Yola, 2023

Gilakas'la Bakwamkala

(thank you ancestral language)

Olakalan mu'lan thus

(I am really grateful for you)

In my dissertation I include as much of you as possible and do so to honor you. I am aware there are likely better ways I could say things and/or the context may be off in some places, but I am doing the best with what I know and once I know better will do better. I have prefaced each segment with *xus wiwaldam* (your words) to ensure you are guiding my work, and I am mixing *xus wiwaldam dhu'wi mamalakala* (your words with english) purposefully as a learning strategy continually making more space for you. I have also created a general glossary of *xus wiwaldam* to support readers in understanding you and another specific to *k'ikatq'makw* (for the photos).



Figure 10: *Kámdzák'w'mas* (salmon berry plant) *lax Dłaksiwe'*,
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Gilakas'la awi'nagwis

(thank you lands along the waters)

It is important to me to include a “land acknowledgement” at the start of my dissertation. For my research, I acknowledge with gratitude each place where I have spent time learning our language and those featured in my dissertation through photos or video footage. Each place holds a special place in my *nok'e'* and my relationship with each differs depending on the *Bak'wamk'ala* learning that took place. My written acknowledgement is accompanied by visiting each place and singing to the land to acknowledge and ask permission for their inclusion in my dissertation as each maintains its own spirit and entity.

The lands featured in my dissertation through photographs and video:

Snuneymuxw – I have so much gratitude to this land as this was where my highly active language learning journey began and was a beautiful time for our household family of five plus *xan dhu'ligas* Scarlett. Initially I struggled with how I could meaningfully learn our language in another’s territory but found ways to do so and maintain a deep appreciation for *Snuneymuxw* as well as those from those lands working to reclaim their language. I only have one photo, but a fair amount of video footage included in my dissertation of *Snuneymuxw*.

Tsaxis – *Kwagu't* village, my language learning relationship with *Tsaxis* is not as deep but there are numerous family photos taken in *Tsaxis* and video footage included in this work.

Tayagu't – *Kwagu't* site, Storey’s Beach, although *Tayagu't* was not a place where language learning occurred, there are numerous family photos taken there included in my dissertation.



Figure 11: *Mu'lg̃n tlas̃a q̃wi'nagwis* (I am grateful for the lands along the waters).

Dłaxsiwe'- *Kwagu'l* site near *'Nalaxstala* where we have engaged in *Bakwamkala* programs as a family, *Kikataq'makw'inuxw* - *Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaaas, 2021

Dłaxsiwe'– *Kwagu'l* site, near *'Nalaxstala*, over the years we have participated in various language learning programs at this beautiful location, nestled in between ocean and a river. It is also where we spent our week for E. *Na'yi's Gaxaliltso* ceremonial week. It is a place I have a strong and personal relationship with as part of our *Bakwamkala* reclamation. There are numerous photos and video footage of *Dłaxsiwe'* included in my dissertation.

Tugwasu – Telegraph Cove. A visit to the interpretive whale centre is featured in my video entitled: *Ax'exsda'nukwex K̃walesanukw Kwakwala* - we want *Kwakwala* to live! A revised version of this video was submitted towards candidacy requirements in this PhD program.

Ukw̃analis – *Dzawadaq'emuxw* village, *Ukw̃analis* is featured in my language and movement video and is a more recent land I have connected to in my language work. Since moving back to the north island and living *lax Gwa'dzi'* I travel regularly in and out of my homeland village as a *Bakwamkala* program facilitator.



Figure 12: *'ma'mu'laḵwala* (thank you song).

This moment captures the beginning of expressing gratitude to our *ḡwi'nagwis* through song and asking permission from all the lands/waters featured in my dissertation on thanksgiving day. *Katḡ'makwinuxw* - Yola, 2025

Gwa'dzi' - *Kwagu'l* ancestral *ḡwi'nagwis*, where our household lives currently. These days I am mostly on the zoom as part of learning, both as a facilitator and attendee, of *Kwakwala Bakwamkala* programs from my home *lax Gwa'dzi'*. *Kikatḡ'makw* of myself *dlu'wḡn sasḡm* in a snowfall *lax Gwa'dzi'* are featured in this dissertation.

T'samas – This is where my language learning began as a soft start many years ago and is also the location of the University of Victoria where I am completing this Indigenous language revitalization PhD program. There are a couple photos of this beginning within this written portion of my dissertation.



Figure 13: *Danxalan's laxa tlgama'is* (singing we are at the beach).
 C. *Mixala* joined me this day in singing to *Tayagul* and asking permission in our *Bakwamkala* to use *kikatg'makw* & *sapilabidu* of *Tayagul* in my dissertation. *Tsaxis* is in the background. *Katg'makwinuxw* – *Yola*, 2025

Danxalatlan tlaxa awi'nagwis

(sing I will to the lands along the waters)

I have been visiting each location featured in my dissertation to express gratitude for their inclusion in my work, and I will complete these visits as I am able to return to these places. I have been doing so with C. *Mixala* and we have been singing and drumming the *Kwagu'l* prayer to the rising sun (shared earlier in dedication to my late brother). The following are two additional songs I would like to sing; one comes from the *Kumugwe'* Cultural Society created for the *Kumuxs'i* people and is entitled the river song and the other created by *xan egas* and is a love

song for the land and water - *laxwala k̄amd̄am ka'eda qwi'nagwis*. The latter is written in an orthography used by our *Liḱwala li'laxwal* (a dialect group *laxa Tl̄mataxw* (Campbell River)).



Figure 14: Members of *Ḵumuxs'i* nation on a beach in their territory singing the *Ḵumuxs'i* river song.

Ḵumuxs'i wa k̄amd̄am *

(Comox river song)

<https://youtu.be/47fBxayvJxI?si=3vr234AK7sxeIBIZ>

***Anis k̄amd̄am* ***

(Auntie song)

Gayutl - Ixt̄s̄amatus̄al̄agalis, Kirsten Dobler

ʔanis q̄amd̄am
Auntie Song
composed by ʔix̄c̄amatus̄al̄agalis Kirsten Dobler

laḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔi-ki ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔi-ki ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔi--ki ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa ʔə-wi-ḥa-ḡwis ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa dəm-x̄si ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa dəm-x̄-si ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa dəm-x̄si ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa dəm-x̄--si ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa dəm-x̄si ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa dəm-x̄-si ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa dəm-x̄si ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa dəm-x̄--si ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa no-q̄ə ta--x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la
laḥa no-q̄ə ta-x̄w̄ə-la	la-ḥa no-q̄ə ta--x̄w̄ə-la

Figure 15: *Anis K̄amd̄am* (Auntie Song), *Gayutl - Ixt̄s̄amatus̄al̄agalis*, Kirsten Dobler

Write up from *xan egas Ixtšamatusalagalis*, Kirsten:

The song *ʔənis qəmdəm* came to me while I was waiting for the Powell River ferry to dock in Little River. I was thinking of my *ʔənis Ruthwəle, Pulaswəle*. It came to me almost exactly as I was wondering how she would be navigating the world as I was navigating at the time. It was a time of turbulence in the language program I taught in, and it was just after it became more widely known of the true horrors of residential schools and the children that never returned to their loved ones. The song came to me as a comfort, and the lyrics reflect where I was at in my language journey. I am certain there could be some corrections grammatically, but I also am content with the simplicity. It is a song that can have lyrics altered to provide different meanings and comforts and I encourage anyone who would like to use it and add in their love to do so.

laħa ʔiki taxwəla – in the sky love

laħa ʔəwiŋagwis taxwəla – in the lands/waters love

laħa dəmxsi taxwəla – in the ocean love

laħa noqē taxwəla – in the heart/mind love



Figure 16: *Maya'xgla xan's qwi'nakola* (respect for our lands, waters, sky).

I have deep respect for our lands, waters, sky as they nurture our *noke'* and interconnect with our *bak'wine'*.
Nugwa'am Yola sitting and singing *dhu'wan dlu'li'gas* Scarlett & *galma'yudlqmi E. Na'yi* during their *Gaxalit'so*
ceremonial week *lax Dlaksiwe'*. *Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Alex'id

(to search for)

This dissertation combines multiple methods of inquiry. I combined autoethnography (see Ellis, 2009) and *Kwakwaka'wakw* ways of being and learning to study my household family's language learning journey using Indigenous storying/storywork (Archibald, 2008).

I interviewed family and community members, created video projects, and worked with *Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, a *Kwakwaka'wakw* photographer, to document and produce images of my family through these years, with emphasis on key milestones for my children, as well as some images of our daily life. Lastly, building on the tradition of research-creation woven by predecessors such as *Tlatlakut* Trish Rosborough, my process also included making several ceremonial items.

My method included reflecting on my photograph collection, taken over nine years (in various sessions primarily with *Tli'li'nuxw* - Kimberley Kufaas, from 2016 to 2025). These include a maternity and newborn session *ka'e C. Mixqala* in 2016, both a family language learning and family portrait session in 2020, documentation of a *Gaxalits'o* coming-of-age process *ka'e E. Na'yi* in 2021, *Abamp dlu'wan sasqm* family portrait session in 2022, *Abamp dlu'wan sasqm* family portraits *dlu'wi* ceremonial items created for this dissertation in 2025, as well as a holiday session with myself *dlu'wan sasqmanu'xw* in our *Inuvik* parkas singing and drumming. I also look back on interviews with *la'stu* (10) *li'laxwql* (conducted as *qdlqbu* (7) individual interviews and *ma'l* (2) joint interviews) from 2023 and a podcast from 2021. Additionally, I reflect on numerous facebook video projects I completed between 2020 and 2022.

This section describes the process of *Tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron creation) I followed in developing this dissertation: 1) building a foundational base, 2) Ties to connect to *li'laxwala* (loved ones), 3) design related to family story, 4) personalized adornments (buttons, beads, bells etc., and 5) use of the *Tsep* in ceremony.

- 1) Building a foundational base for the *Tsep* has to do with *Alixwala* (preparing to leave on a journey).

This includes the foundational aspects of my *Bakwamkala* journey – early experiences in language learning, where are we now/where are we going/how will we get there etc., the Mentor Apprentice Program, simultaneous MAP and PhD, social media, project-based and youtube learning. These foundations are described in the first section of: *'Nqm #1 – K̇as'wal'i, 'mansa, K̇apa, K̇ana* (gather your things, measure, cut with scissors, sew) fabric and materials selection, measuring of *laxwala*, cutting of material, sewing of *Tsep* base.

- 2) Ties to connect the *Tsep* to *li'laxwala* (loved ones) is related to *Laxwe'gila* (gathering strength).

This includes: Interviews – conversations with household members, other family and community members conducted as part of this self-study. In a video made early in my doctoral program I share personal challenges but also positives in my experience of family learning and was created to engage family and community in *Bakwamkala* reclamation. These can be found in the second section of: *Ma'l #2 – Muxsqmd, Muxw'ida's xus tsep, Ax'exsda'mas kan guxwi'dos?, kan guxwi'dos* (to tie something up, tie up your dance apron, do you need my help?, let me help you) adding straps/ties, connecting pieces for fastening *Tsep* around the waist of a *laxwala*.

3) Design on *Tsep* related to family story is aligned with *K'akut'lap'a* (learning together) as a family.

This includes the topics of: raising children with our language – one parent learning/teaching, catering to different ages and stages of children, each child's *Bak'wamkala* development differs depending on where I was at in my learning journey, inputs/outputs, our language learning helps me engage with *xan sasam* on a deeper level, family learning is beautiful chaos, stories – the good, the bad and the silly. *K'akut'lap'a* (learning together) is connected *Sgnala* (to be whole), restorative experiences *dlu'wan sasam*. Included in this section is: *Nugwa'am* (I am), *Gaxalits'o* (coming-of-age), house brushing, *hamsqml*, history of ceremonial pieces connected to language loss and reclamation, coping mechanism for trauma, *Hase'* (love gift/breath of life), singing/song creation for wellness, creative expression of self and gratitude (prayers) through language, *Haitzaqv'la* and joyous experiences of language learning through song and dance. This sharing can be found in the third section of: *Yudaxw #3 – Angwa, Nugwa'am, 'Namyut, Nuyam* (who are you? I am, family, story) family storywork (design depicting family history on *Tsep*).

4) The personalized adornments (buttons, bells, buttons etc.) added to the *Tsep* are related to *Ugwakala* (different), differing, unique and special areas of interest in the larger context of ILR occurring outside of our household.

This wide range of areas includes: the need for storying, land inspired rather than land based, family friendly programming, nothing for the children/youth without them, worldview, encouragement for the future, trauma informed practice and lateral kindness, “why bother”, creativity in resource production, language and movement (video),

Kwakwaka'wakw fashion show. These various topics can be found in the fourth section of:

Mu #4 – *Amusa*, *Amudzam*, *Tla'yala*, *Gabam* (decorate, decorations, beads, buttons).

5) The *Tsepila* completion and ceremonial use of the *Tsep* is a part of *Hase' gaxan* (breath of life/love gift in connection to myself).

This last section contains dedications to my three *sasam*, sharing their births, naming and individual *Bakwamkala* journey in connection to mine and to accompany ceremonial pieces created for each of them. These tributes can be found in the fifth section of: *Saka* #5 – *Kikas'u*, *Dli'dlugwe'*, *Yagwam*, *Yakwima* (*Pasa*/ceremonial family treasures, treasures, gift/present given at a *Pasa*, gift received at a *Pasa*).

Gwayi'le'las
(our ways of doing things)

Methods/Methodology

Alongside the process of my language learning journey, I reviewed many Indigenous language revitalization resources including academic literature, youtube videos, podcast series family language learning books on and Master's/Doctoral *Kwakwaka'wakw* projects/thesis that related to my experience. Here I explore the theories of autoethnography, Indigenous storywork, and *Kwakwala/Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology and consider the creative application of these methods – such as personal dedications, interviews and reflections, and photographic images - as a *Kwakwala* learner and scholar involved in a language learning research journey.

As part of my doctoral research, I completed 9 interviews in 2023 with loved ones connected to our family learning journey. As part of this, I interviewed *xan dlu'li'gas* Scarlett, *xan galmayudłami* E. Na'yi and *xan nakagawe mayudłami* C. Mixala. C. Mixala was interviewed just as she turned 7 and in her interview she said, "our language is a special gift, and I feel bad for people who don't get to have this gift." I remember being in awe of this statement that very much came from her and was not something I had put forward, at least not verbally or directly.

After some delays in my studies, I later reflected back on these interviews (2 years later) and it was a profound experience. I then completed summaries of each for inclusion in my dissertation. I honoured the flow of each interview and took notes of what stood out to me and/or resonated with my *noke* (heart/mind) at the time. Each interview highlighted different aspects of this incredible journey speaking to the vastness of ancestral language reclamation. Some stories emerged from these interviews that have been included here. These ones made my *noke* happy -

ikan noke kas! - or stood out as something profound. For example, a story from one of the interviews stands out of a community member who had commented, "there's that lady who speaks *Bakwamkala* to her kids, I wish I was one of her kids!" This sharing made my *noke* feel good, to be known as the lady who speaks *Bakwamkala* to my kids.

In my interview with *xan's Noxsola* Isabel and Nora they shared of their experiences in day school and in our dialogue around *Bakwamkala* revitalization they highlighted how we are also learning how to care for one another again. This is profound for me, that through the reclaiming of our language we are also reclaiming love - wise words I learned from our beloved *noxsola'wale'* Sally "*Łaxwala'pa Łi'łaxwala* - love each other loved ones."

I wrote personal dedications to each of *yudaxwan sasam* and in these three segments I included stories of our journey that depicted, "the good, the bad, and the silly" (silly being a shift from "ugly"). I also included stories that aligned with this metaphor in the main body of the work. I wanted to provide a range of stories that demonstrate language reclamation. It is not all glorious, it encapsulates a wild ride of ups and downs and all arounds. But it is the most worthwhile endeavour I have ever embarked on and know that my children's life paths have been positively impacted for the better.

As I wrote my dissertation there were stories that stood out in my *noke* (heart/mind) and knew they needed to be included, others came up in Facebook memories from previous learning projects, and some were occurring while I was writing. Our people have made use of story since time immemorial and am grateful for this process of telling my/our story, "the beautiful chaos of family learning in ancestral language reclamation," and being able to reclaim this practice of storywork/storytelling/storying to share with others to provide insight and encouragement!

Axexsdanukwex kwalesanukwex xan's yakantala - we want our language to live!

For nearly a decade *xan's laxwala Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas has documented our family journey through photographs. I have utilized these photographs in my dissertation to share of the various parts and progress of my/our learning. Photos were used to recall, construct and refine stories throughout my dissertation. I consider these images both creative documentation of the process, and pieces of our stories that I wish to share.

The photo shown here captures our current state: *Nugwa'ams Abampa* - I am mom, focused on *xan alxste' mayudlami San'yas* fastening his *hamsaml* to him. The *hamsaml* was gifted to him at 4 years old as I was losing my ability to speak solely in our language to him and is a symbol of my commitment to continue to learn and speak to him as the focus of my proficiency. Nearby is *xan mayudlami C. Mixala* supporting and helping to care for her *wakwa* as is her way of being and I am able to speak a solid amount of our language with her. She is my sidekick speaker and loves to take part in singing our language with me. Further away is *xan galmayudlami E. Na'yi* with her back turned to us who likes to keep herself at a distance from the chaos of her *tsi'tsaya* (younger sibs) and beautiful mess of a mother who is trying to keep it all together! My ability to speak to my eldest is significantly diminished but I will keep trying.

He'am gweli - that's life! *Hanallan* - I will keep going!

'Wiga'xan's wi'la kakutla'pa - let's learn together!

Becoming one with *Dzunuk'wa*

(the wild woman of the woods)

*I begin with the story of *Dzunuk'wa*, the wild woman of the woods, who steals *ganganangam* (children) and takes them to live with her in the forest. *Dzunuk'wa* is typically described as a large, hairy, unkempt ogress with big red pursed lips, bushy eyebrows and wild unruly hair. She*

is often sleepy with eyes barely open. In numerous versions of this story the ganganam (children) outwit Dzunuk'wa and escape back to their community³

In this section I weave the story of Dzunuk'wa, the wild woman of the woods, throughout the main topics of Kwakwaka'wakw methodology, Indigenous storywork, a framework developed by Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) and autoethnography, a methodology founded by Carolyn Ellis (2009). These are the methodologies used in my self-study of my household's learning of Kwak'wala, our ancestral language for my dissertation... "and now the work begins" (Archibald, 2008).

Abampes kangextola

(My mom's button blanket)

I have known of Dzunuk'wa for as long as I can remember as this story is depicted on xan Abampes kangextola (my mom's traditional button blanket). The design portrays a terrified looking gananam (child) peering out from the top of a basket strapped to the back of Dzunuk'wa.

Interestingly, there is a second Dzunuk'wa on the other side of the gananam.

Our kangextola tell stories of our family history and often connect to our origin stories. Our late *Haiłzaqv Ump* speaks to this, "you can put your clan crest on your button blanket. In our area, we put on our lineage and personal lineage crests. You put on crests associated with your name" (Jensen & Sargent, 1986, p. 42). This story of Dzunuk'wa is used by many Kwakwaka'wakw, as well as other neighbouring nations including the *Haiłzaqv* (Our world

³ For more stories of Dzunuk'wa, please see videos from Our World Language, Bella Bella Community School grade 7 class: *Lhalha The Story* (<https://vimeo.com/301692835>); Alexander Heuman: *The Dzunuk'wa* (<https://vimeo.com/235148877>); *Tlisalagi'lakw school grade 6/7 class: The legend of Dzunuk'wa in Kwak'wala with English subtitles* (<https://vimeo.com/234248237>), and Storyhive's *Dzunuk'wa* (https://youtu.be/dd5imrrUj_0)

language, 2018) and does not necessarily connect back to our family's specific history. To my understanding *Dzunuk'wa* is more of a general story and I have not seen her on other *Kwakwaka'wakw* or *Haitzaqv k'angextola* (button blanket) and it seems a unique design featured on *xan Abampes k'angextola*.

Our *k'angextola* are powerful and as the title of Jensen and Sargent's book suggest they are "Robes of power" (1986). The late Tony Hunt (*Gigame'* – traditional leader of the *Kwakwaka'wakw*) speaks of this empowerment,

"If I don't have a button blanket on, I feel incomplete. When I have one on, it changes my feeling, and then I'm one hundred percent confident with what I'm doing. I think about the responsibilities that's placed on me. I feel a closeness with my ancestors. I feel a spiritual strength." (Jensen & Sargent, p. 46)

This distinctive and powerful image on *Abampes k'angextola* reminds me of our *Bakwam gangananam* stolen from their *giga'ol'nukw* (parents) by the residential school system. It reminds me of *xan's Abamp* who was taken at the age of *saka* (5) from her village of *Ukwqanalis* (Kingcome Inlet) and placed at St. Michael's residential school *lax 'Yqalis* (in Alert Bay). It reminds me of *xan's Ump'wale'* who was also placed in St. Mike's away from his community of *Waglisla* (Bella Bella) at the age of *k'atla* (6). Perhaps *Dzunuk'wa* is depicted on *xan Abampes k'angextola* telling the story of her kidnapping and/or perhaps I am the scared *ganananam* (child) in the basket and it tells my story of being raised by *ma'l* (2) *giga'ol'nukw* (*ma'l* (2) *Dzunuk'wa*'s) who first met in residential school.

Gayutłan lax

(I am from)

Linda Tuhiwai Smith tells us she comes from a very specific place as an Indigenous researcher, sharing an image of a Maori village in New Zealand (Smith & Tuck, 2013). I interpret her statement as she doesn't speak for all Indigenous people or places, and although she may relate to and hopes to encourage the broader Indigenous community, her positionality or locating of self is specific to a particular place, community, family and personal experience. I have journeyed through different ways of introducing myself and expressing who I am and to where I connect. Previously, while living and learning in *Snuneymuxw* my introduction was this:

Nugwa'am Yola. Gayutłan lax Ukwanalis, Tsaxis, dlu' Wágłisła.

Gukwalan lax Snuneymuxw. Gilakas'la Hul'q'umi'num'. Kákutłan xan Kwakwale'

(I am Wind. I am from Kingcome, Fort Rupert, and Bella Bella. My house is in Nanaimo. Thank you Hul'q'umi'num'. I am learning Kwakwala).

Gayutłan lax Ukwanalis (I am from Kingcome) – I am from *Ukwanalis* and have always known this and felt this since childhood even though I did not live in the village until my youth. It is *xan's Abampes* ancestral home and I feel a strong connection to the river, the mountains, the valley and the small community full of my family. *Gayutłan lax Tsaxis* (I am from Fort Rupert) – I have come to feel a strong connection to *Tsaxis* through *xan sasames Ump*. My great grandmother was also *Kwagu'l* from this community. We lived next door to the village and were a daily part of community life for *saka* (5) years and *xan ma'lan sasamanu'xw* (my two smaller children) came into being during our time here. *Gayutłan lax Wágłisła* (I am from Bella Bella) – I am from *Wágłisła* because *xan's Ump'wale* (the one who raised me) was from this community. I lived in this community off and on throughout my childhood. I have not spent much time in *Wágłisła* in recent years since *xan's Ump's* passing and I now have *yudaxwan sasam* (3 children)

making the trek challenging. However, I have many childhood experiences of time out on the *qwi'nagwis* (land and waters) with family that connect me to the *Haiłzaqv*. I also have core memories of participating in the children's traditional dance series where I enjoyed hours of song and dance led by *xan's Ump'wale* who was a prominent cultural revivalist in the community. I also experienced my first ancestral language learning as part of the *Haiłzaqvla* exposure program at the community school in *Wáglisla*. *Gukwalan lax Snuneymuxw* (I live in Nanaimo) – Our family of *saka* (5), along with *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett, and I lived in *Snuneymuxw* for *mu* (4) years. This is where my simultaneous doctoral and active *Bak'wamk'ala* journey began and I am grateful for our family time and opportunities while in *Snuneymuxw*.

Gilakas'la Hul'q'umi'num' (thank you *Hul'q'umi'num'*) – As a *Kwakwala* learner it is important for me to acknowledge the ancestral language of the land I am learning and living on and this was largely inspired by the work of Natalie Baloy (2011) and her encouragement to hold space for the language of the land.

Nugwa'am

(I am)

Dzunuk'wa

(wild woman of the woods)

*I currently identify largely as a mother since much of my time is consumed by *xan sasam* (my children)'s wellbeing. I am so concerned with caring for them that I often struggle to look after myself. I relate to *Dzunuk'wa* as my hair is often disheveled, my body hair unkempt, I am generally tired and often smelly. On numerous occasions *xan nakagawe ma'yudlami* (my middle born) has said, "Mom, you smell like cheese." I am often a hairy, smelly, sleepy ogress who is overly concerned with and run down by my clever and mischievous *sasam*. In our outdoor*

adventures (especially during covid times) I often spend lots of time gathering up ma'lan sasqmanu'xw (my two smallest children) only to have them escape from my embrace and run away.

Dzunuk'wa coming-of-age story

My least favorite story of Dzunuk'wa is the version from my mother's ancestral village of Ukwānalis where she is tricked into entering the home belonging to a Gigame' and his daughter with promises of having her eyebrows beautified but is then killed. Following her death items are taken from Dzunuk'wa's home laxa atli (in the woods) to be used for ceremonial purposes (Willie, 2020). Poor Dzunuk'wa! She just wanted to be beautiful and accepted by society!

The items taken from Dzunuk'wa's home are now used in our Gaxaliltso (coming through) coming-of-age ceremonies for young Kwakwaka'wakw ladies. I relate this story to my eldest daughter's Gaxaliltso. In anticipation I gathered these items, which came to us from Dzunuk'wa, to be used during this ceremony. A week-long process for xan galma'yudlami (my first born) and xan dlu'li'gas (my niece) took place and we began each day with cleanses, expressions of gratitude in Kwakwala and personal care. While dlu'li'gas Scarlett had not yet started her moon cycle, it made sense for her to experience the ceremonial week alongside E. Na'yi at this time. Both spent majority of their time in solitude away from their electronics. I did my best given the covid restrictions to facilitate a meaningful process for both girls. We went for beach walks, read about Kwakwaka'wakw teachings, cooked meals, cleaned, and practiced a song and dance for the final public dressing ceremony. A select number of women from the family were invited to spend time with both girls to purposefully talk or engage them in an activity.

Being an adaptive family, we opted to have their fathers take part in the process and on the last night of their seclusion the girls spent the evening *dlu'wis Ump*. They learned to chop wood, start a fire, to drive and to safely light off fireworks! To complete the week we had a final, public dressing ceremony for E. *Na'yi*. Her eyebrows were plucked, a ceremonial ritual related to the story of *Dzunuk'wa*, by one of her life journey mentors (who we had previously selected for her at her ten moons naming) the morning of this final ceremony. I facilitated this final ceremony alongside *xan dlu'li'gas* Scarlett as an assistant *laxa Dłaksiwe' awi'nagwis*. Due to covid a small number of family members were invited to witness, and I was able to give an opening and facilitate the ceremony in *Kwak'wala* with prior support from a *Noxsola* (wise one) Elder speaker and reading from written sheets. I took great care to ensure the girls were supported through a meaningful process honoring them and uplifting them as young ladies.

In this process, everything and everyone involved was held with great care and sacredness. It provided a foundational experience, setting-the-stage, for conducting my research. This aligns with the concept of conducting research as ceremony and the valuing of our relationships with all of creation (Wilson, 2008). I cared for my research in this same way I cared for *xan galma'yudłami* E. *Na'yi* and *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett and all that was involved (people and parts) as sacred, aiming to conduct myself in a good way honoring my family, community, and ancestors as well as the academy.

***Dzunuk'wa* is a supernatural creature**

All the village ganganəm (children) are taken by Dzunuk'wa to live with her in the atłi (woods). This occurs when a mother fails to live up to her end of a binding agreement with Dzunuk'wa who had used her powers to create a nawaləkw gnanəm (supernatural child) for this

woman who desperately wanted to be a mother. The village *giga'ol'nukw* (parents) are extremely upset and worried for their *gangananam* safety. They band together, storming through the *atli* to *Dzunuk'wa*'s fortress to confront her and demand she return their *gangananam*. When the *giga'ol'nukw* arrive, the *gangananam* are happily playing and exploring alongside *Dzunuk'wa*. As it turns out, *Dzunuk'wa* is just a lonely old woman wishing for company and has been largely misunderstood by the villagers. A new agreement is made between the *giga'ol'nukw* and *Dzunuk'wa* allowing the *gangananam* to visit her in the summer giving the *giga'ol'nukw* a seasonal break from childrearing responsibilities and helping *Dzunuk'wa* to be connected.

I relate this version to the *Kwakwaka'wakw* belief of the spirit world being with us always and the importance of considering my ancestors in my language work and doctoral research. I connect this to the concept of spirit-based research put forward by McIvor and align with her statement “many elders say that the language lives in us and it is a matter of being ready, open, and then through the graces of our spirit helpers, the language will begin to emerge.” (2010, p. 143). Atleo's (2004) Nuuchahnulth worldview of the physical and spiritual being intertwined as one aligns with my conceptualizing our ancestral language as having its own spirit. It is important for me to conduct myself in a way that would receive the stamp of ancestor approval and honors the spirit of our *Kwakwala* language.

Indigenous Storywork and *Kwakwaka'wakw* Methodology

Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) includes traditional storytelling, high regard for Elder knowledge and 6 principles in her Indigenous Storywork methodology. These principles are the 4R's from the work of Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991): respect, reciprocity, responsibility and swapping relevance for reverence which help the researcher to become story ready. Archibald

(2008) adds holism, interrelatedness, and synergy resulting in 7 principles to create the framework of Indigenous storywork.

Sara Florence Davidson used these principles in her dissertation to guide her ethical process and describes how she applied these principles to her research (Davidson, 2019, p. 23-39). Davidson's use of these principles reminded me of 4 *Kwakwala* concepts I put together as a framework to use in my counselling practice working with our Indigenous communities. They are: *Maya'xq̄la* – respect, *Malkw̄ala* – remember, *Hut̄ila* – listen, *K̄akut̄la* – learn. These were compiled long ago for a different purpose when I was just beginning my ancestral language learning journey. However, they are still relevant to my current work and have been applied to my dissertation research. Below is a brief description of my understanding of these terms.

Maya'xq̄la (respect) - the simple translation of this concept would be to respect, but there is much more to this *Kwakw̄q̄q̄'wakw* teaching. This is a prominent teaching amongst our nation, and we are encouraged to have respect for and to honor our relationships with all of creation in our daily lives.

Malkw̄ala (remember) - I was first introduced to this term following an Elders' gathering in my ancestral village of *Ukw̄q̄n̄alis* in 1995 when I was just 15 years old. A set of videos were created from the event including interviews with these Elders, most of whom are now passed on, and this set was entitled: *Malkw̄ala* – to remember. From this experience I am reminded to remember the wisdom of our ancestors.

Hut̄ila (to listen) - I am most familiar with its use as a command in teaching our children how to conduct themselves in the *Gukw̄dzi* (bighouse) and I also now use this often with *x̄an sas̄qm* (my children) daily. As a counsellor it is of the utmost importance to be able to *hut̄ila* and hold space for the sharing of *x̄an's li'laxw̄al* (our loved ones).

Kakutla (to learn) - I believe I have always valued new learning and as part of my ancestral language learning journey I am very familiar with this term and use it regularly in various contexts. For example, *Wigaxan's 'Wi'la Kakutlapa* – let's learn together (a *Kwakwala* video series I helped create) and a concept I promote often in my language work.

These concepts provided an early foundation that has grown significantly and guided my research and language work ensuring I carry myself in a good way and to live with the consequences of this work within community. It is important for me to honor the connections I have with my community, my larger family, the *Noxsola* (wise one) Elder speakers who support my *Bakwamkala* learning, my household and most importantly my personal relationship with our ancestral language itself.

Laxwe'gila (gathering strength) in Kwakwaka'wakw methodology

I have chosen *Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology examples to use in my research: 2 align with Indigenous storywork (*Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology) and the other 2 with autoethnography and *Kwakwala* (*Kwakwala* methodology). I chose these pieces as I have much appreciation for these *Kwakwaka'wakw* academics, their work and our connections. As such, I discuss each piece individually and share of my relationship with each author using their first name in honor of our affiliations.

Maxine Matilpi, Button blanket pedagogy (2012).

I came to know Maxine through my work with the Elders and our *Kwakwala* group at Vancouver Island University in *Snuneymuxw*. There is also a connection in the loss of her sister *Tlatlakut*, Trish, a highly influential force in my *Bakwamkala* and doctoral journey. I had opportunity to go for a walk and talk with Maxine to find out more about her button blanket pedagogy. As part of her LLB (Law degree) she created 12 *kangextola* (button

blankets), and these were displayed at the First Peoples House at the University of Victoria. What stood out to me from our discussion was the magnitude of stories that come from the creation of our *k'angextola*. Not only the stories that our *k'angextola* tell with their designs but the stories that are shared when working on them with family and community as well as the stories that are created as part of the blanket making. *K'angextola* then are not only a form of pedagogy but can be a *Kwakwaka'wakw* storywork methodology.

Gwigilakw, Margaret Wilson, “Hey, Where Can I Go for Help?": Aboriginal People and “Good Medicine” at an Urban Aboriginal Health Agency (2018).

I am connected to Margaret through our *Bak'wamkala* work and she is a beautiful teacher and great supporter of my language work. In her dissertation Margaret uses the seven principles of Indigenous storywork by Archibald (2008): respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, holism, inter-relatedness, and synergy, as well as adding relevance from the work of Kirkness and Barnhardt (1991). She also refers to the *Kwakwaka'wakw* story of the *Hqumumu* (butterfly) to guide her methodology. The metaphor of the *Hqumumu* in its metamorphosis speaks to the transformation of urban Indigenous populations, through wholistic health supports encompassing all aspects of the medicine wheel (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual) including her own story. Margaret provides a good example of how to include both Indigenous storywork and *Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology (*Hqumumu* metaphor) in a dissertation.

Tlatlakul, Trish Rosborough, *K'angextola* sewn-on-top: *Kwakwala* revitalization and being Indigenous (2012).

Trish and I connected through our community *Kwak'wala* group *laxa Ts'amas* (in Victoria) in 2012. I hosted this group at my workplace and Trish facilitated alongside her mentor, *xan sasam*'s great-aunt Fuzzy. Often our group was small, so I became intimately connected with Trish and *Anis* Fuzzy through *Kwak'wala*. Our household family moved to *Tsaxis* where I crossed paths with Trish on occasion whenever she was home visiting. Trish supported my facilitation of the *Kwak'wala* group in *Snuneymuxw* and my application for this doctoral program in Indigenous language revitalization. Her sudden passing in 2019 was a devastating loss to many, but she leaves a great legacy, and I am grateful for her work to continue guiding mine. Trish incorporates *Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology (*K'angextola* – button blanket metaphor) and autoethnographic methods of storytelling and self-reflexivity in her dissertation. Her work provides good role modelling for my dissertation and has been helpful to my personal *Kwak'wala* journey.

Laura Cranmer, Reclaiming *Kwak'wala* through co-constructing *Gwantilakw*'s vision (2015).

I connected with Laura during online sessions with our *Kwak'wala* Elder speakers' group in *Snuneymuxw*. In discovering she included autoethnography and photo elicitation in her *Kwak'wala* learning self-study I reached out, and she generously presented a personal power point of her dissertation over zoom. Laura's work encompasses the same components included in my research: an autoethnographic self-study of my *Kwak'wala* journey. I also align with her use of photo elicitation, and I have similarly included numerous family photos documenting our ancestral language journey in my work.

I have great *Kwakwaka'wakw* strength to draw from in these four examples. The beauty of drawing from our own intellect in methodological decisions for academic work is paramount.

The *k'angextola* stands as a spectacular example of how to use *Kwakwaka'wakw* methodology for research. “There are so many ways you can express on a button blanket. It’s like a large, blank sheet of paper. You can draw and write anything on it. I think the crests were actual pictographs. They have a definite meaning that they convey very quickly, an early form of writing” (Jensen & Sargent, 1986, p. 42). These are the words of *xan's Ump'wale*, and they encourage me to draw on our own methods of expression leading to my discussion on autoethnography and relating to my personal story of becoming *Dzunuk'wa*.

What is autoethnography?

“As an autoethnographer, I am both the author and focus of the story, the one who tells and the one who experiences, the observer and the observed, the creator and the created. I am the person at the intersection of the personal and the cultural, thinking and observing as an ethnographer and writing and describing as a storyteller” (Ellis, 2009, p. 13).

“Autoethnography is the study of culture through the self, so you have to remember that we aren’t just telling a story, this isn’t just autobiography, this is research, because through our story we’re not only understanding ourselves but we’re understanding our location in a culture...”

(Scott-Pollock, 2021).

Introduction to Autoethnography

Autoethnography as a methodology is diverse and the variety of ways to carry it out are numerous. “In writing, the author also may interview others as well as consult with texts like photographs, journals, and recordings to help with recall” (Ellis et al., 2010, para. 5). I focus on

what is most relevant about this method to my application of it in my dissertation research. I begin with a brief history of autoethnography acknowledging the key contributors in its development. I discuss criticisms of the field including relational ethics, and end with examples of how Indigenous scholars have used this methodology in their work. I also incorporate three connected *Dzunuk'wa* stories, unifying this section, and blending Indigenous storywork with autoethnography.

History

Autoethnography is an approach to research and writing that seeks to describe and systematically analyze (*graphy*) personal experience (*auto*) to understand cultural experience (*ethno*) (Ellis et al., 2010, par 1). The words composing the term auto-ethno-graphy are Greek in origin and “the origins of autoethnography arise in the field of anthropology and the ways in which anthropologists wrote ethnographies of their own people” (Muncey, 2010, p. 32). Ellis et al. (2010) provide a substantial overview of the origins of autoethnography, and I summarize this history here. An academic struggle began in the 1980’s regarding the ontological, epistemological and axiological limitations of the social sciences. Scholars began to express views of science being largely interconnected with “the vocabularies and paradigms the scientists used to represent them” along with other profound realizations and new understandings that created an overwhelming desire for better ways of doing research. There was also a great need for colonial and authoritative resistance, and a wish to conduct research in a way that didn’t exploit cultural members or discount the importance of relationships.

Gradually, scholars across a wide spectrum of disciplines began to consider what social sciences would become if they were closer to literature than to physics, if they proffered

stories rather than theories, and if they were self-consciously value-centered rather than pretending to be value free. (Ellis et al., 2010, paras. 2-3)

Sarah Wall (2014) refers to Ellis and Bochner as “the Gurus of autoethnography.”

Carolyn Ellis has been the frontrunner in the development of the field along with her partner Art Bochner who joined her in this work. Ellis and Bochner have published a substantial amount of literature on autoethnography and have also pushed for more expressive and meaningful ways of conducting research. Much of the autoethnographic work produced by these two purposefully evoke an emotional response from its readers and are often related to social justice.

Criticisms

Producing text for an audience will always invite critical review. Methodological issues to be dealt with include the legitimacy of this approach and the sub-headings of truth, memory, self-indulgence. Personal issues to be dealt with include self-preservation, hurtful reviews and retorts of lying (Muncey, 2010, p. 107).

Muncey provides this summary of the criticisms of autoethnography but then also states, “autoethnography addresses the power imbalances that can arise from more traditional forms of research” (Muncey, 2010, p. 130). Criticism towards the validity of this methodology stood out as the biggest issue in my exploration. Bochner shares the story of his first encounter with Ellis who was presenting on her autoethnographic work and he questions her, “why are you so defensive” (Ellis & Bochner, 2014). Ellis, a founder in the field, was defensive because this methodology was and still is vastly different from traditional forms of research and those aligned with conventional methods may question autoethnographic legitimacy.

**Blending Indigenous storywork and autoethnography through embodied performance...
stories of *Dzunuk'wa***

*I am guided on to the floor backwards and everything is dark. I feel myself being released from the hands guiding me and I know to turn myself around to face the audience although I can't see them. I can't see much of anything through this *Dzunuk'wa* mask. The two half slits for eyes and the small circular hole for the mouth are my peek holes and all I see are bits of grassy ground. It is my first-time in the *Dzunuk'wa* mask, and I am anxious, uncertain and disoriented. I slowly look around towards the audience as if I am *Dzunuk'wa* scanning the landscape for loose *gangnanam* (children). I am waiting for the dance beat to begin dancing. But the dance beat never comes, just the steady beat that has been there all along. I realize this beat is what I must work with and just as I began to make more obvious *Dzunuk'wa* movements I am whisked off the floor.*

This was my first experience dancing the *Dzunuk'wa* mask in a cultural sharing with a traditional dance group. It is the only time they ever had me show this mask. No one said anything to me following this, but I realized I hadn't "performed" as I should. To my credit I wasn't given any prior instruction or guidance, nor did we practice as a group for this performance. In my previous experience I only ever recall the *Dzunuk'wa* being shown to a dance beat and that is what I prepared for on my own accord. Following this experience, I learned there are different ways the *Dzunuk'wa* can be shown, one is during the *T'seka* (the red cedar bark ceremony) to a dance beat and the other is shown during the *T'hasala* (peace dance ceremony) and is a steady beat where you make the movements but don't actually dance. Here I have described my first experience in performing *Dzunuk'wa* and although I do believe it is my story to tell there are others involved in the story leading to my discussion on relational ethics.

Relational ethics

Tolich (2020) refers to Clandinin and Connelly's 2000 work, *Narrative inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*, and their question: "Do I own a story because I tell it?" He also puts forward, "the word auto is a misnomer. The self might be the focus of the research, but the self is porous, leaking to the other without due ethical consideration". Tolich (2010) puts forward the following ten guidelines for relational ethics in autoethnography:

1. Respect participants' autonomy,
2. Practice "process consent,"
3. Recognize the COI or coercive influence when seeking informed consent after writing the manuscript,
4. Consult with others, like an IRB (Ethics Committee)
5. Don't publish anything you wouldn't show persons mentioned
6. Beware of internal confidentiality
7. Treat an autoethnography as an inked tattoo
8. Photovoice anticipatory ethics claims that no photo is worth harming others
9. Those unable to minimize risk to self or others should use a nom de plume
10. Assume all people mentioned in the text will read it one day

Tolich urges us to "move from the self to the other" (2020) and encouraged me to consider *x̄an li'laxw̄al* (my loved ones) in my research.

Humoḷan Dzunuk̄wa **(I am watching *Dzunuk̄wa*)**

I watch Dzunuk̄wa move on the floor towards the audience slowly, largely, and loudly. She is dragging her feet as she goes, she is an obviously large and cumbersome creature, who is eerily

groaning “OOOOOO” as she moves and slowly scans her surroundings. Upon reaching centre stage Dzunuk’wa lies on the floor and falls asleep. After a short nap she arises, stretching, yawning and continues her search for gangnanam (children).

This is my attentive witnessing of a *laxwala* (loved one) enacting *Dzunuk’wa* following my first attempt in being *Dzunuk’wa* described earlier. This provided good learning for how I could embody *Dzunuk’wa* and perform to the steady rhythm rather than the dance beat. Although I am telling this story it is someone else’s *Dzunuk’wa* portrayal relating to Tolich’s relational ethics guidelines in autoethnography and the consideration of the other.

Indigenous autoethnography

The following is a demonstration and exploration of the ways that Indigenous scholars have applied and adapted autoethnography to their cultural positionality and worldview.

In his article Whitinui states his purpose is “to preface indigenous autoethnography as a culturally distinctive way of coming to know who we are as indigenous peoples within the research agenda” (2013, p. 461). He suggests a framework for Indigenous autoethnography and this includes:

McIvor (2012) blends autoethnography with Indigenous research methodology in her self-study of learning her ancestral Cree language. She also includes concepts of ability to ‘protect’ one’s own uniqueness [and] maintain who we are [...] [our] ability to ‘problem-solve’ enables an Indigenous person to consider making a number of ‘adjustments’ that help to craft a story that is well-reasoned, trustworthy and authentic [...] ability to ‘provide ‘greater ‘access’ to a wide range [of] different methods, scenarios, experiences

[...] ability to ‘heal’ is achieved when ‘learning’ about ‘self’ is seen to be critical to one’s existence and survival as a collective of cultural human beings (p. 478)

integrity and spirituality as being impertinent in her research.

McIvor (2010) incorporates “relevant stories and entries from her language learning and research journals” (p. 137) and suggests, “as Indigenous researchers (while inviting our supporters to join), that we make a commitment to a greater uptake of spirit-based research in the academy and beyond” (p. 140). McIvor speaks to the vulnerability, described as “nudity” at times, as part of this methodology (p. 142) providing samples of her personal journals.

Chew et al. (2015) explore their ancestral language reclamation experiences as part of graduate programs using collaborative autoethnography. The authors provide a brief overview of their method as follows:

Each author began by contributing an initial written reflection guided by the following research questions: 1) What shaped our decisions to pursue language reclamation through graduate schools? 2) What are the benefits and challenges of engaging in language reclamation in a university setting? 3) What are our goals after completing our programs? (p. 78)

Following this they collaboratively comment on each other’s pieces and notice their “personal journeys continued to unfold” and “reflections on the meaning of our experiences continued to develop” (p. 78). Then in putting together the manuscript the original piece was reconstructed incorporating the reflections and feedback of the others creating personalized vignettes of their experience.

Indigenous scholars’ methodological use of autoethnography demonstrates a push back against convention, moreover, “Indigenous autoethnography as a resistance-discourse is intended

to inspire people to take action toward a legitimate way of self-determining one's collective and cultural potential" (Whitinui, p. 481). Indigenous autoethnography also acknowledges knowledge creation put forward by self as interconnected to family, community and ancestral ties.

My knowledge primarily comes from my family, my communities, my connections. My 'self' belongs to them. Therefore, I must constantly be reflecting on 'Who do I speak for?', 'Whose stories and knowledges am I able to share?' alongside, 'What am I speaking for?' and 'Who am I speaking to?' (Bishop, p. 372)

Indigenous autoethnography supports research that best fits for myself *dhu'wan sasam*, my family, community, *xan's Bak'wamkala*. I was inspired by those who have used this methodology in their ancestral language reclamation work, namely McIvor (2010) and Chew et al. (2015), who provided examples of autoethnographic self-study of ancestral language reclamation as part of a doctoral journey.

Dzunuk'wa'nakwala

(becoming *Dzunuk'wa*)

I make my way slowly, but surely on to the dance floor... I am hunched over, lunging my way to centre stage, continuously vocalizing “OOOOOO” as loudly as I can causing a vibration through my entire body, I make motions as if I am scooping up and tossing gangananam (children) into the large basket strapped on my back. When I arrive to centre stage, in front of our singers who are drumming a quick and steady beat, I stop for a rest. My head droops, my arms go limp, and I take a short nap, sleeping while standing. Once awake I stretch my arms, rub my eyes, continue vocalizing and begin to make my way back to where I came from. Before I leave the floor, I slowly turn to look back at the audience taking one last scan of the horizon in my search for vulnerable gangananam.

This is my experience of becoming *Dzunuk'wa* through an embodied performance. In my first experience I wasn't aware of the different ways to perform this dance (and this version is not really a dance in my opinion) and felt uncertain. I was not provided with much guidance and those in a position to support me likely assumed I would just know what to do from our shared experience of witnessing the *Dzunuk'wa* in our *Gukwdzi* (bighouse). Regardless, it was a profound learning experience for me, and I became *Dzunuk'wa* numerous times after this. I learned how to embody *Dzunuk'wa* becoming one with her essence. This experience and these three connected stories are not just my story but the story of those involved. The story of *Dzunuk'wa* herself also connects to my family, community, and *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation. If leaving out the first story which implicates others my overall sharing would be incomplete and would not tell as profound a tale linked to the paradox of relational ethics. I also relate this to the embodiment of we in autoethnographic performance; “perhaps autoethnography is not about the self at all; perhaps it is instead about a willful embodiment of ‘we’” (Spry, 2018, p. 628).

Story ready

Both Jo-Ann Archibald (2008) in *Indigenous Storywork* and Shawn Wilson's (2008) *Research is Ceremony* talk about the importance of being story ready and in a position to receive new learning from our knowledge keepers. As I conclude this section, I consider this idea of being story ready. Was I story ready? Have I received this new knowledge in a good way? Was I ready to share my story? I explored the topics of Indigenous storywork and autoethnography while positioning myself as a *Kwakwala* learner drawing on the *Kwakwaka'wakw* story of *Dzunukwa*. I have intentionally included *Mu* (4), as is often the flow in *Kwakwaka'wakw* tradition: *Mu* (4) *Kwakwala* terms (*Maya'xala*-respect, *Malkwala*-remember, *Hutlila*-listen, & *Kakutla*-learn), *Mu* (4) *Kwakwaka'wakw* scholars (Maxine Matilpi, Margaret Wilson, Trish Rosborough & Laura Cranmer), and *Mu* (4) Indigenous autoethnographic pieces.

I have practiced the art of autoethnographic story telling using *Dzunukwa* as a method for integrating this new learning into my previous experience. McIvor (2010) says of Indigenous storytelling "some are born storytellers, some become great storytellers and some never develop the knack" (p. 141). I believe practice helps one to become a storyteller and I have taken the opportunity to do so here. I am ready to share my journey of ancestral language reclamation using Indigenous storywork, autoethnography and *Kwakwaka'wakw* knowledge as my methodology. I am certain this sharing will be beneficial for myself *dhu'wan sasam*, my family, my community, my nation and most importantly for our *Bakwamkala* language itself. I prepared and carried myself through this doctoral research in a way that my ancestors would approve of. I am telling my and *xan sasam*'s story for the benefit of future generations. I conclude with words from *Anis* (aunt) Marion speaking to her hesitation in button blanket making, "My dad said, 'Make a blanket, Marion, you have practiced enough. It's time for you to make something that tells a story'" (Jensen & Sargent, p. 33).

Kas'i lax kayas sesa kwalskwal'yakw'wale'
(walk in the path of our ancestors)
Gayutł - Daisy Robertson'wale'



Figure 17: *Tłg'wo* (oh my/how beautiful)! *Gagas'wale* Emily's *tsep* she made as a teenager. Taking inspiration from this beautiful *tsep* and following the lead of *xan 'nula Wadzidalaga*, I have made a replica of this *tsep ka'an galma'yudłmi E. Na'yi* for this dissertation. *Katq'makwinuǰw - Wadzidalaga*, Midori Nicolson, 1992

Tsep

(ceremonial dance apron)

Hase'

(breath of life, love gift)

This dissertation will *kas'i lax kayas* (follow the path) of *Tlatlakul'wale'*, the late Patricia Rosborough who aligned her dissertation with our *kangextola* (ceremonial button blanket) honoring *Tlatlakul'wale'* and the process of *tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron making). Amongst our *Kwakwaka'wakw*, *Hailzaqv* and other northern coastal peoples we wear a *kangextola dlu' tsep* in our ceremonies. This work will align with *tsepila*, validating its existence through ceremony and carry on as *Hase'* with *xan sasam*. This *tsepila* process is as follows: 1) foundational base, 2) connecting pieces for fastening *tsep* to a *laxwala*, 3) family storywork (design depicting family history), 4) unique features of buttons, beads, sequins, bells etc., and 5) validation of *tsep* through ceremonial presentation.



Figure 18: *Ik kqna'tida k'angextola* (beautiful is the button blanket).

Nugwa'am Yola bgwikw dhu'wan C. Mixala, wearing a *k'angextola* made by *Nagegadzi*, Marie Hunt and *tsep* by *Qvuduyuatli'wqle'* Lillian (Humchitt) Gladstone, *lax Tayagul*. *Ix'akan tlaxa tsi'tsigwi* (I like the seagulls) captured *laxa kikatq'makw* as they connect to the *Matasu* (a ceremonial dance) upheld *dhu'wan Gagas'wqle'* Emily and passed along with me being the most recent *laxwqla* to uphold it. *Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016



Figure 19: *Tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron making).

Replica *tsep* made for *dlu'li'gas* Mayumi for her *Gaxaliltso*. The pink flowers honor *xis Abamp*, *Kakuitla'mas Anis* Tomiko's Japanese ancestry. *Katg'makwinugw* - Michelle Ann "Tomiko" Hinatsu, 2018

Tsepila

(ceremonial dance apron making)

'*n*am #1 – *K*as'wal'i, 'Mansa, *K*apa, *K*ana (gather your things, measure, cut with scissors, sew) the **foundational base** - fabric and materials selection, measuring of *laxwala*, cutting of material, sewing of *tsep* base, aligning this with *Alixwala* (preparations to leave on a journey) and **the beginning of my *Bakwamkala* pathway.**

Ma'l #2 – *Muxwsamd*, *Muxw'ida's xus tsep*, *Ax'exsda'mas kan guxwi'dos?*, *kan guxwi'dos* (to tie something up, tie up your dance apron, do you need my help?, let me help you)...adding straps/ties, **connecting pieces for fastening *tsep* around the waist of a *laxwala***, relating this to the **interviews** conducted as part of research component **and video titled: *Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesanukwex Kwakwala* (we want *Kwakwala* to live) to engage family and community** in my/our *Bakwamkala* journey as an encouragement to join our reclamation efforts and contribute to *laxwe'gila* (strength building) of our people.

Yudaxw #3 – *Angwa*, *Nugwa'am*, 'Namyut, *Nuyam* (who are you?, I am, family, story)...**family storywork** (design depicting family history on *tsep*), in this section **I share my *Bakwamkala* journey in relation to *xan sasam***, how we *kakutlapa* (learn together) and household experiences of *sgnala* (being whole).

Mu #4 – *Amusa*, *Amudzam*, *Tla'yala*, *Gabam* (decorate, decorations, beads, buttons) ... and sound (bells etc.) relating this aspect of *tsepila* to **interesting and unique topics in Indigenous language revitalization** that seem to me *ugwakala* (different) from most ILR topics including our **Ancestral Language Reclamation for Wellness video.**

Saka #5 – *Kikas'u, Dli'dlugwe', Yagwam, Yakwima* (*Pasa*/ceremonial family treasures, treasures, gift/present given at a *pasa*, gift received at a *pasa*) ... this section features the **ceremonial pieces created for *xan sasam***, the *Tsitsep ka'e E. Na'yi dhu' C. Mixala*, the *hamsamt ka'e San'yas*, **and the dedications for each of them.** This is my *Hase' gaxan* (love gift/breath of life in connection to myself... *xis Abamp*).



Figure 20: *Lalax'sola* (passage through life, an example is the coming-of-age ceremony). *Dlu'li'gas* Juliana wearing her replica *tsep* at her *Gaxaliti'so* standing outside *Hi'manis* (standing forever) *gukwdzi* surrounded by *Li'laxwal* (*Anis* Gloria Nicolson, *Anis* Helen Willie, 'nula Charlene Dawson, *Anis* Elizabeth Taylor, 'nula Pam Dawson, *Abamp* Emily Willie) *lax Uk'wanalis*. *Katg'makwinuxw* - Ingo Spier, 2014

Galaband

(begin/start)

Ama'ya'nakwala

(smaller, gradually getting)

Summary of Introduction

In this section I introduce myself in *xan Bak'wamk'ala* sharing a bit about who I am as a mother of three (*yudaxwan sasam*), a *Kwak'wala* learner and the *Kwakwaka'wakw* and *Haitzaqv* nations and *qwi'nagwis* (lands/waters) I connect to, along with a summary of what my dissertation entails: a self-study of my and *xan sasam*'s ancestral language reclamation journey, the creation of ceremonial pieces for each of *yudaxwan sasam*, this written piece with 140+ *kikatq'makw* (photos), videos and concludes with dedications to each of *yudaxwan sasam*. In this earlier section I also speak to the shift in family structure that occurred over the course of my self-study, speak to the relationship I have with the following *qwi'nagwis* featured in this dissertation: *Snuneymuxw*, *Tsaxis*, *Dlaksiwe'*, *Tugwasu*, *Uk'wanalis*, *Ts'amas & Gwa'dzi'* and how I have been visiting these places *dlu'wan nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Mixala* singing and drumming to express gratitude and ask permission for featuring them in my work and list two songs created within our nation in connection with *xan's qwi'nagwis*. I speak to my use of the terms *Bak'wamk'ala* (Indigenous language), *Kwak'wala* (dialect of the *Kwagu'l*) and *Dzq'wala* (dialect of the *Dzawadq'enuxw*) and how I am attempting to express creativity in my use of different fonts and formatting etc. I describe my methods/methodology which honors *Kwakwaka'wakw* ways of being and Indigenous storywork/storytelling and autoethnography and includes interviewing family and community members. I list the various topics of: *Alixwala* (preparing to leave on a journey) the foundational aspects of my *Bak'wamk'ala* journey, *Laxwegila* (gathering strength)

interviews with family/community and video to engage others, *K'akut'apa* (learning together) raising children with ancestral language/*Sgnala* (to be whole) restorative experiences to do with household experiences of reclaiming the use of our language and ceremony, *Ugwakala* (different) unique and special areas of interest & *Hase' gaxan* (breath of life/love gift of mine) dedications to *yudaxwan sasgm* . Finally, I outline the framework bringing all these components together following the flow of *Tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron creation) honoring my predecessor *Tlatlakul*, Trish Rosborough who aligned her dissertation with our *K'angextola* (ceremonial button blanket), the more prominent accompaniment to our *tsep* (ceremonial dance apron).

Tsepila, 'nām #1 – the foundational base

K̄as'wā'i (gather your things)

'Mānsa (measure)

K̄apa (cut)

K̄ana (sew)

- fabric and materials selection, measuring of *taxwāla*, cutting of material, sewing of *tsep* base, aligning this with *Alixwāla* (preparations to leave on a journey) and the beginning of my *Bakwām'kala* pathway.



Figure 21: *La'mān galabqnda* (I am starting)!
Tsep base with small bags of *ila'yala* (beads) laid out on top preparing to bead the design.
Kata'makwinuxw - Yola, 2023

In this section I relate the foundational base of the *Tsep* which involves *K̇as'wal'i* (gather your things), *'Mansa* (measure), *K̇apa* (cut), *K̇ana* (sew) with foundational aspects of my personal learning. Within are the foundational pieces of my journey, such as, early language experiences, learning efforts, and current strategies- there are the base of a *Tsep* and my *Alixwala* (preparations to leave on a journey) providing a foundation for the rest of my journey *dhu'wan sasqm*.

Gel'ida'as

(came from or started from, where you...)

Early experiences with ancestral language

For as long as I can remember I have been interested in our *Bakwamkala* language of *Kwakwala*. I have a vague childhood memory of playing *Kwakwala* bingo *lax Ukwanalis* while visiting. I would have been kindergarten age and remember it as an intriguing experience. The first ancestral language I was exposed to in childhood was *Haitzaqvla*, a related language of *Kwakwala*. We moved from *xan Ump'wale' Haitzaqv* community of *Waglisla* to *Ukwanalis*, our mother's village, and I then became familiar with *Kwakwala* as a youth. In 2012, I attended a weekly community class in an urban centre, in 2016 I joined a community language nest attending three part days per week (within our ancestral lands), and in 2019 I started the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) learning almost daily while bringing language into our home in an urban location different from where I began. I am now 13+ years deep into my active *Bakwamkala* journey. I have been living and learning back in our homelands for over three years and have plenty to share about me and my household family's experience.

I attended *Kwak'wala* classes as a young teen led by x̱an *Anis* Gloria, now the sole remaining first language *Bak'wamk'ala* speaker in our family (those who descend from my mother's parents) as well as the only speaker living in the village year-round. I had my first summer job *lax̱ Ukw̱analis* at the age of 14 as a homemaker for the Elders in our community. I had the privilege of homemaking for our last monolingual speaker of our *Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw* and possibly of the whole *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation. At the time it felt like something profound, but it wasn't until I became active in learning that I realized how much so. Granny *Duda* did not speak english and I did not speak our *Bak'wamk'ala*. I remember washing her dishes and, in my attempt to connect with her blew up the dish glove like a balloon and showed her which made her laugh. I can still visualize her in her wheelchair and hear her laughter. Such a big laugh for a small but mighty Elderly woman. How amazing she saw the world solely from the lens of our ancestral language, the *Bak'wamk'ala* of our lands, the lands where our people have lived since time immemorial. I wonder what she thought of me as a young teen, unable to communicate with her in the language of our people, blowing up her dish glove like a balloon!

The last speaker of the *Wukchumni* language in California, expressed concern for the future of her language: "it seems weird that I am the last one" (Wilcox, 2019, 7:00). I wonder if Granny *Duda* had any idea she was the last of her kind and what she thought of our declining language. Granny *Duda* was nearly 100 when she left us for the spirit world on February 10th, 1996, two days before my 16th birthday, our last monolingual first language *Kwak'wala* speaker.

Kayas

(a pathway, place of walking)

Our *Bakwamkala* pathway



Figure 22: *Alixwala* (preparing to leave on a journey).
Nugwa'am Yola *bgwikw dlu'wan nakagawe ma'yudłami C. Miłala lax Tayagul tłgma'is,*
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Ga'man's kan's kaku'te *

(we have come to learn)

ka'ku'te xan's yakandas

Mu'la tlan's kwalskwal'yakw

Wa'tala tax xan's yakandas

We have now come to learn

To learn our language

Our old people will be grateful

When they hear our language

Gayut# - Mayanit & Gwixsisalas (Diana Matilpi & Emily Aitken)

It was when *x̣an saṣam* were born that I began consistently learning our *Bak'wamḳala* of *Kwakẉala*. In *x̣an galma'yudḷami* first year I attended a weekly community class: in *x̣an nakagawe ma'yudḷami* first year I attended a language nest with *x̣an al'x̣ste' ma'yudḷami* (Calai, middle-born) 3-4 times per week: while I embarked on a simultaneous PhD in Indigenous language revitalization and the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) through First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC). The birth of each child has propelled my language learning forward and has helped make it a daily practice. Each day I use what I know as much as possible within our household and continue to learn daily as part of community learning programs and self-directed efforts. It has become a way of life and has changed my life significantly.

'Wixḍan's gax̣ le

(where have we been)?

'Wiḍan's le

(where are we now)?

'Wiṭan's le

(where are we going)?

'Wigilaṭan's ḳan's la'wile

(what will we do to cross [water])?

La'ṃan's laga

(have we arrived)?

These prompts are adapted from the Language Revitalization Planning Program webinar series with the First Peoples Cultural Council (available on youtube).



Figure 23: *'Wixdan's gaḡ le?* - where have we been?
Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wgn sasgm with all of us except E. *Na'yi* wearing our parkas from *Inuvik laḡ Gwadzi*.
Kata'makwinuḡw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaa, 2025.

'Wixdan's gaḡ le

(where have we been)?

My active language learning began following the birth of *xan galma'yudlami*, now 15, amped up significantly after the birth of *xan nakagawe ma'yudlami*, now 9, and became highly intensive following *xan alxste' ma'yudlami*, now 7. In hindsight it seems an intuitive progression with an innate increase in motivation as each child was born. I do not recall thinking “now that I have children, I want to learn our language for them”, it just happened naturally.

In alignment with a *Menominee* father’s ambition to ensure their language carries on for a generation past himself by raising his daughter in their language using “natural immersion,” (Corn, 2020, 1:05), our household follows a similar method. In our home it is an emerging natural immersion environment where I “just talk” (Corn, 2020, 1:06) using our *Bakwamkala* as much as possible especially with *xan sasamanu'ḡw*.

'widan's le?

(where are we now)

Currently I am an instructor for an online *Bakwamkala/Kwakwala* Diploma in Indigenous Language Proficiency program through the University of Victoria and community partners: *Nawalakw Healing Society* and our *Kwickwasutaineuk-Haxwamis* nations. Our program is typically on “the zoom” 4 hours a day and at least 3 days per week. I teach one course per term and take part in the other program courses when I can as a learner. I attend online community evening classes twice per week and facilitate nighttime learning programs twice a week through the *Nunwakola Cultural Society* with our *Dzawada'enuxw* nation. I am leading an in-person small pod of learners with our *Kwagu't* nation and attend an adult immersion program one day per week *lax Tsalgwadi* with the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw*. I use what *Kwakwala* I know as much as I can within my household daily. My ability to speak to each family member differs with my greatest fluency being connected to *xan sasamanu'xw* (my smallest) youngest two children. *Xan sasam* mostly respond in english but typically understand what I am putting forward in our *Bakwamkala* and when asked to respond in our language normally do so.

'Witlan's le?

(where are we going)

My hope is we will increase the *Kwakwala* use in our household, and it will be the main language spoken in our home. Previously I had hoped we might be able to speak solely in our *Bakwamk'ala* within our home but realize this is highly ambitious and despite my best efforts may not be realistic any time soon. I also hoped to raise *xan sasam* “in our language” however “with our language” is a better fit. I have recently taken inspiration from those who have been raised by learners, then have become parents and raising their children in their ancestral language (Morales, 2022). I hope *xan sasam* will be able to do the same and my efforts will pave the way for them to do so.

The *Wukchumni* family, featured in the Language Keepers video series (Wilcox, 2019) from California provides an inspiring story of intergenerational language recovery. The lone Elder speaker created a dictionary on her own and in the process drew in members of her family including a daughter, granddaughter and great-grandchild to learning the *Wukchumni* language. I did not have the opportunity for intergenerational learning from grandparent-to-parent-to-child. There was a time I felt a sense of loss in the inability to engage in multiple generational learning for our household. But I have been able to move through this with a deep appreciation for our Elder first language speakers who support us. I am also beginning to envision the future possibilities with *xan sasam* and *tsitsuxwtlama*.



Figure 24: *K'wisux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today)!
Nugwa'am Yola & Alxste' ma'yudlqmi Sqn'yas in the snowfall lax *Gwa'dzi'*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2022

'Wigilatlan's kan's la'wile?

(what will we do to cross [water])

San'yas, *ame'yax̄e* who is 7 years old, has been the focal point of my fluency development. I began speaking almost solely in our *Bak'wamk̄ala* to him around 10 months (when I began the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) and my PhD in Indigenous language revitalization) and this carried on until he was nearly 5. Like the *Wukchumni* mother (Wilcox, 2019), I attempted to teach *San'yas* the *Kwak'wala* words for things first before he could learn them in English. I began to reach my limits in my ability to support his socio-emotional needs in *Kwak'wala* and needed to use English in his 4th year. This was a bittersweet shift and one I struggled with but hearing a similar experience from an *Anishinaabe* mother raising her children to speak *Anishinaabemowin* (*Ojibwe*) as a second language learner (Beauchamp & McGahey II, 2023) helped my *noke'* to know I am not alone in this.

Taking inspiration from a *Nuuchanulth* family (showcased in *Voices on the Rise*) *San'yas* became the “focal point” (Hurtle, 2016, 13:02) of my language development. Although I am no longer able to speak solely in our language to him, he is still and will continue to be the focus for me. It is more tangible to build my proficiency related to his speech development rather than with each household member. It would be unrealistic for me to endeavor to match the speech development needs of each member. Focusing on *San'yas* gives me a manageable focus and then the entire household also benefits. Along with this I also ensure each of *x̄an sasam* are provided with *Bak'wamk̄ala* learning opportunities on a regular basis. The majority of my recent *Kwak'wala* programming has been online and I miss the in-person connectivity as well as outdoor adventures. I have just recently begun to join an adult immersion program *lax Ts̄algwadi* one day

per week which utilizes the “where are your keys” program not only to expand my learning but more so to connect in-person with other language learners.

La'man's laga?

(have we arrived)

There was a time I thought if I worked hard for several years, I could possibly become proficient in our *Bakwamkala*. I worked extremely hard during the three years of MAP and my simultaneous ILR PhD program and was able to progress my *Kwakwala* proficiency and understanding of Indigenous language learning. However, it was an overwhelmingly intense time that occurred during the covid pandemic and was not sustainable. This is not uncommon for those working in language and Lorna Williams, Indigenous language activist, refers to those “working triple time – learning language, working on language, learning how to revitalize, how to recover and how to teach” (Peruzzo & Gilpin, 2023, 6:59) as “superhuman” (8:26). I now know reclaiming my ancestral language is a lifelong journey.

I have since become more flexible in my learning and I am finding a better flow. It seems the fall and winter are good times to focus on *Kwakwala* and spring and summer are better times for getting outdoors and playing soccer. A seasonal approach to family-based language reclamation, with more intensive learning in the home (and/or on the zoom) during the fall and winter season balanced with outdoor movement and adventures in the spring and summer, has provided a more sustainable path for our *Bakwamkala* journey over the long run. I am also now accepting that I will spend my lifetime progressing my fluency.



Figure 25: *Lawi da xus hamsqml* (take off your supernatural bird mask).
Nugwa'qm Yola taking *hamsqml* off *glxste'ma'yudlami San'yas* with *E. Na'yi* behind me *lax Tayagul qwi'nagwis*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Ikagawe

(better than)

Shift from Counselling to *Bak'wamkala* reclamation support

I previously supported our people through my counselling work as a certified counsellor. I appreciate the Indigenous program at the University of Victoria I attended to obtain this certification. However, I often felt conflicted as someone who continues to struggle with various life challenges. It seems to me the field of counselling is highly influenced by western views and throughout my formal counselling years felt the pressure to have my life together when it often was tumultuous. Shifting into supporting roles in *Bak'wamkala* reclamation has been a better fit for me. If I continue to be as connected to my family and community as I am, I will be impacted by the ongoing challenges we face and will likely continue to have my own personal struggles. This will make it hard to return to any formal counselling work especially if living within our homeland communities. Advocating for the reclamation of our languages as part of collective wellness, demonstrating and role modelling the healing benefits of learning language feels more authentic to who I am and where my life is at.

'Ngmax'id

(do something at the same time)

Simultaneous Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) and Doctoral journey

In 2019 I was accepted into the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) with the First Peoples Cultural Council. I had previously applied not long after the start of my *Kwakwala* journey but was not accepted. I was incredibly disappointed but there was much less funding available through FPCC at that time. I do believe it would have been a life changing experience then as it was once I was eventually accepted. Although I would have had so much more

Kwak'wala learning and experience under my belt if starting sooner I also recognize my MAP and ILR PhD simultaneous journeys to be timely.

It was a profound and intensive experience to begin MAP and a PhD in ILR simultaneously while still nursing an infant. *San'yas* was 10 months old, *C. Mix'ala* was just turning 3 and *E. Na'yi* was 8 when I began these simultaneous journeys.

I remember feeling in awe and out of place as I began my doctorate coursework at UVic. It seemed that my cohort were well seasoned ILR veterans, and I was very much a novice. It also seemed to me that I was the only one who did not know how to speak my ancestral language. As time went on, I came to realize the spectrum of language ability amongst my cohort as well as all Indigenous language groups as I learned more about the field of ILR.

MAP was overall helpful to my *Kwak'wala* learning. The program is designed for an Apprentice (learner) to work with a Mentor (first language speaker) one-on-one to learn immersively. The current MAP through FPCC requires 300 hours to be completed per year for 3 years. This is a lot of time and if able to make this work it can support great learning and progress a learner's proficiency significantly.

MAP was an interesting experience for me and although I did manage to complete the entire program (900 hours over 3 years) much of it was not as the program intended. I began MAP in August of 2019 with a first language speaker from our *Uk'wanalis* village who lived in the same city centre (*Snuneymuxw*). I have deep appreciation for this Mentor as he enabled me to begin this MAP and intensive *Kwak'wala* journey. It proved to be challenging to find time, space and a flow for our MAP work. It was also a process of remembering and reawakening the language for this Mentor. One day I invited my Mentor over for lunch and language learning and

he brought his sister. While we were having lunch, he said to me, “my sister is going to help you now and I can help when she is busy.”

It was a beautiful time with my new Mentor, we were able to complete various activities, and I learned a great deal, as MAP is intended. She would come to my home and sit with me while I sorted laundry, washed dishes, and swept floors teaching me the language to go with these activities. I worried that these were not engaging activities for her and would do my best to make her comfortable with tea and goodies. These repetitive activities were fantastic for my learning and to this day I still know the language from those times. We also grocery shopped together, usually for our community learning group but sometimes for our household, and I would offer to purchase her items as a token of my appreciation for her time and energy in supporting our household’s grocery shop. We also went out to restaurants and would use the menu, table items and meals as stimuli for learning. I am grateful for this wonderful time with my Mentor developing a connection through our *Bak’wamkala* and it showed me how beneficial MAP can be.

In March of 2020 the onset of covid hit worldwide just as I was nearing the end of my first year of MAP. I still had a significant number of hours to complete by the March end deadline as well as my panel demonstration. I was determined to complete my hours and had to find alternatives to learning as I couldn’t meet in person with my Mentor or panel members. I drove around the backroads of *Snuneymuxw* for hours listening and repeating the words of *Kwak’wala* learning CD’s, that only worked in my vehicle, with *xan sasam* sleeping in the back, watched tons of *Kwak’wala* resources on youtube and completed my panel (demonstration of learning progress) with two first-language speakers over the phone.

It was incredibly intense to complete a significant amount of learning hours during this initial time of covid when the world seemed uncertain. I had to be innovative in my learning strategies and engagement with my Mentor and other first language speakers supporting me on my panel. I managed to complete my first year of MAP during the onset of the covid pandemic and as covid continued to impact our ability to gather in person my overall MAP experience was altered.

Following the three years of MAP I carried on with the MAP connections program, completing 100 hours per year. I found this to be a helpful continuation, more flexible, less intensive and more manageable as a mother of three.



Figure 26: *Wixan's amla* (let's play)!

E. Na'yi, San'yas, C. Mixq̄la and dlu'li'gas Scarlett with puppets at the playhouse *lax Tsaxis*. *Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Nina's

(brave)

Social media

The onset of the covid pandemic propelled me to share our *Kwakwala* journey on social media using the facebook app. Taking inspiration from another calendar and word-of-the-day project led by *Ikawegam*, Lindsay Beans *lax 'Yqalis*, I began to share out videos of our daily calendar and word of the day learning. This led to numerous learning projects shared regularly over facebook and many of them included other families. This learning and sharing over social media went on consistently for more than 3 years but seemed to dwindle after our return to our homelands. Occasionally I share facebook “memories” (a feature that highlights past posts) with added new reflections, a new learning or a cute story related to *xqn sasqm*. Upon reflection of this experience, I recognize the pros and cons to sharing over social media. But overall, I believe it was helpful to my and my household’s learning, to the other families and community members who participated in learning and to our larger *Kwakwaka'wakw* (*Kwakwala* speaking peoples) nation. Over the years and to this day I have members from our nation approach me to share they have seen my videos with *xqn sasqm* and find them inspiring.

Prior to covid and sharing our *Kwakwala* journey my social media (facebook) use was infrequent. During this time of intensive learning and sharing on social media became a daily part of my life. Now that I am not sharing our journey regularly or facilitating *Kwakwala* projects on social media I am finding my daily habit of scrolling to be less useful. Simon Bird (2021), a Cree speaker promoting his language over facebook contemplates “social media as a double-edged sword”. Carla Voyageur shares positives of social media during the covid pandemic (First Peoples’ Cultural Council, 2020). *Malidi*, Sydney Roberts speaks to the use of

social media and comments on the recent increase of its use amongst our nation. *Mglidi* shares her *Kwakwala* journey on Instagram as Language Weaver to engage youth (Joseph, et al., 2021).

During my period of active sharing and facilitation over facebook I found the following to be useful:

- Provided a way of connecting to others who were learning
- Helped our family bring language into our home
- facebook is the preferred social media platform used by our first language speakers
- Enabled collaborative learning in a flexible format
- Encouraged visibility of our language on social media
- Able to organize daily posts into weekly or project albums for later reference

What wasn't helpful:

- Vulnerable to unhelpful comments and criticisms
- Discomfort in public sharing and vulnerable children and safety concerns
- Time and energy consumption to be responsive to questions and comments
- Leads to viewing of other posts on facebook that may not be helpful to wellbeing

I have seen and been a part of numerous word-of-the-day projects over social media. I have heard comments such as “one word at a time won't get you to fluency” (Kapashesit, 2023, 3:10). I agree you won't become proficient in your ancestral language if only learning one word per day, but at the end of a year you will know 365 words that you previously didn't know. Those 365 words can provide a small foundation to build on the following year, and it may encourage you to carve out more time for learning. One-word-a-day learners can also boost morale for those deep in the trenches of learning and if passing those words on to others, those words will

continue to live on! I personally wouldn't underestimate the value of learning one-word-a-day as every bit can be helpful and if that is what you have time for better than nothing.



Figure 27: *'matsali gada* (what is this)?
Bak'wamk'ala kakutla dlu 'wan sasqanu'xw & dlu'li'gas Scarlett in background *lax Tsaxis t'ama'is.*
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Tlatla'yukwala

(take turns doing something)

Projects-based learning

During my intensive time of *Kwakwala* I focused on projects to progress my learning and to support others. All projects were related to my interests and the needs of our family while also thinking of others. These projects were: *'Wiga'xan's 'wi'la kakutlapa* – let us learn together! a series of 6 videos featuring children, targeted at children's learning, accessible on youtube; a set of 20 early learner books with accompanying audio from four first-language speakers;

'ma'mak'wayu (calendar), and; word of the day project involving numerous children and families that ran for 3+ years and was shared over facebook (fb), as well as a weather fb project, a land-inspired fb project, a yoga fb project, a wellness fb project and other various fb projects. There was great variety in these projects, but what they had in common was a focus area and/or topic. The facebook projects were daily segments, and it seemed that focusing on doing a bit everyday of a particular topic of interest added up to much bigger learning over the long run.

'Wiga'xan's 'Wi'la K'akut'apa – let us learn together! These are a series of immersive 6 videos for kids by kids. These videos were created to support *Bak'wam'kala* learning in the home based on my needs. The first three videos contain basics such as: numbers, colors, basic intros, etc. The last three are related to morning routines (in preparation for a school day), mealtime, and bath/bedtime routine. This project enabled our household to learn language for our regular routines that has continued to be a staple in our daily *Kwak'wala* use.

20 early learners immersive *Kwak'wala* books with audio recordings and translations:

this set of books was also created to support home-based learning. There are not many *Kwak'wala* books in general but even fewer to support children or early learners. These books have been used to facilitate online programming (currently a staple in the courses I lead through UVic) and to bring *Kwak'wala* into our homes. I have yet to fully learn all the language found in these books although I was the one to translate them from english into *Kwak'wala* with our group of 4 first language speakers. These books continue to be useful a few years later and I anticipate they will continue to be for years to come.

facebook projects: the calendar/word of the day, weather and land-inspired projects were intentional efforts to continue our learning with community during the covid pandemic, create a circle of learners specific to each age group in our household, and to create visibility of our language on social media. These projects were the most substantial and longest running projects with the 'Ma'mak'wayu (calendar) project running for 3+ years. The other projects were to do with Yoga, Wellness, Domains of the home, and Movement, were shorter and related to my personal learning interests.

Gagamagila

(doing something different/strange)

youtube learning

youtube has proven to be an extremely helpful tool in my *Kwak'wala* learning as well as for my PhD and Indigenous language revitalization studies. As a parent to three children, doctoral student, language learner, facilitator, and advocate, I am busy. youtube has enabled me to learn our *Bak'wamk'ala*, ILR topics and other areas related to my PhD, while managing my household and taking care of dishes, laundry, tidying, cleaning, organizing, cooking, etc. I honestly would not have progressed to this point in my *Kwak'wala* ability or my doctoral work without the use of youtube. youtube has also enabled me to bring language into our home daily. My children regularly hear our *Bak'wamk'ala* from youtube, and I am so grateful for this as we do not have a connection to a first language speaker who can support us with language use within our household. The *Kwak'wala* videos available on youtube help us to bring our language to life in our home! *Mglidi*, Sydney Roberts, refers to youtube use in her learning journey (Joseph, et al., 2021b).

La'ethala

(entering a house/building)

Ama'ya'nakwala

(becoming smaller)

Summary of 'nam (1) - Foundational beginnings

In this section I share of my early experiences in ancestral language learning including my childhood years in *Wáglisla* and first exposure to *Haítzaqvla* and becoming connected to *Kwakwala* once we had moved to *Ukwánalis* when I was a youth. I then explore our (mine and *xan sasqm's*) *Bakwámkala* path beginning with *Ga'man's kan's Kákutle'* (we have now come to learn) some encouraging words of wisdom for language learners, followed by a snapshot of our path using the following prompts taken from the First Peoples Cultural Foundation: '*Wixdan's gax le* (where have we been)?, '*Widan's le* (where are we now)?, '*Witlan's le* (where are we going)?, '*Wigilatlan's kan's la'wile* (what will we do to cross [water])?', and *La'man's laga* (have we arrived)?

'Wixdan's gax le (where have we been)? My interest and efforts in learning my language seemed to naturally progress with the birth of each child who are now 15, 9 and 7. What has taken place is an emergence of natural immersion and bilingualism occurring within our household.

'Widan's le (where are we now)? I am currently an instructor for a diploma program in partnership with UVic, *Nawalakw* Healing Society and our *Kwickwasutaineuk-Haxwamis* nations, attending the other courses in this program as a learner when I can, I facilitate two evening programs over zoom through the *Nunwakola* Cultural Society with our

Dzawada'enuxw nation, am leading a small pod of learners with our *Kwagu'l* nation and am attending an adult immersion in-person program one day per week *lax Ts'algwadi* with the *Gwa'sala-Nakwaxda'xw* nations. I use what I know to the best of my ability daily within household especially but also with others outside of our home.

'Witlan's le (where are we going)? I had previously hoped we would become a household of speakers, speaking solely in our language, but now my aim is to gradually increase the use of *xan's Bakwamkala* and eventually it will be the main language of our home. I am also beginning to envision my use of *xan's Bakwamkala* beyond *xan sasqm, dlu'wan t'sitsuxwtlama* (with my grandchildren)!

'Wigilatlan's kan's la'wile (what will we do to cross [water])? *San'yas* has been and will likely continue to be the focal point of my proficiency development. It is more feasible to build my *Kwakwala* vocabulary around his language needs as he is the youngest and everyone else still benefits and grows with our use of our *Bakwamkala*. This is more attainable and encouraging than if I were to attempt to meet the language development and speaking needs of each *xwanukw* (child).

La'man's laga (have we arrived)? I had previously thought if I worked hard at learning for a time of 3-5 years, I could become highly proficient but now know it is a lifelong journey. I did make significant progress in the three years of the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) while simultaneously moving through first three years of my doctorate and I am continuing to build on that foundation daily and anticipate doing so for the rest of my lifetime. I have found a seasonal approach to learning is more sustainable and flows better with our family life. This includes learning zooms almost nightly throughout fall

and winter and outdoor activities such as soccer in the spring and summer that are not specific to learning but always incorporating as much of *x̄an's Bakw̄amk̄ala* as possible.

I also talk about my simultaneous Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) and Doctoral journey which was highly intensive but timely and beneficial to my overall learning as the PhD work provided an outlet for expressing my experience. I describe the role of social media in my/our household learning journey listing the pros and cons and I describe the various projects that supported our learning and highlight the benefits of youtube. Overall, all these components have been helpful to my *Kwakw̄ala* learning *dhu'w̄an sas̄am*.

Tsepila, Ma'ł #2 – ties for fastening tsep to a laxwala

Muxwsamd (to tie something up)

Muxw'ida's xus tsep (tie up your dance apron)

A'exsdā'mas k̄an guxwi'dos? (do you need my help) ...

K̄an guxwi'dos (let me help you)

- adding straps/ties, **connecting pieces for fastening tsep around the waist of a laxwala**, relating this to the **interviews** conducted as part of research component and video titled: **Ax'exsdānuḡwex K̄walesānuḡwex Kwak'wala** (we want **Kwak'wala** to live) to engage family and community in my/our **Bak'wamkala** journey as an encouragement to join our reclamation efforts and contribute to the **łaxwe'gila** (strength building) of our people.



Figure 28: *łłakwa* (copper or red)!

The beginnings of the beaded design of two coppers on the *tsep*. *Katā'makwinuḡw* - *Yola*, 2023

In this section I relate the ties used to fasten the *Tsep* on to a *laxwala* (loved one) as connecting pieces in engaging *li'laxwal* (loved ones). I include the related terms of: *Muxwsqmd* (to tie something up), *Muxw'idas xus tsep* (tie up your dance apron), *Ax'exsda'mas kan* *guxwi'dos?* (do you need my help) & *Kan guxwi'dos* (let me help you) as *Tsep* are often tied on to a *laxwala* by others including *xan sasam* whose *Tsep* are usually fastened on to them by myself. This section contains parts of my research intended to engage *li'laxwal* in hopes of encouraging and supporting others in the reclamation of our ancestral language. It includes interviewee relationship descriptions and the summaries of the interviews as well as a video for sharing with family and community. These pieces are purposeful in my hopes of *Laxwe'gila* (gaining strength) with family (outside of my household) and community in the reclamation of *xan's Bak'wamkala*.

Kikayud

(conversation)

Kaki'sta'a

(to question, find out something, investigating)

Interviewee Relationships

I interviewed a selection of those closest to *xan sasam* and my *Bak'wamkala* journey around the time of the research component. This resulted in nine interviews with 10 people, as some were joint interviews.

Those interviewed included: *xan sasam* C. *Mixala* (who had just turned 7) and E. *Na'yi* (age 12), as well as *xan dlu'li'gas* Scarlett (age 13). Although I had planned to interview *San'yas* and even crafted a consent script in *Bak'wamkala* to use with him, which felt profound, I didn't end up interviewing him. I realized that he didn't necessarily understand the difference between the two languages as both are within him and so irrelevant to interview him about his experience of learning language. This feels like a significant point and one I see as a win!

Anis, Michelle Ann “*Tomiko*” Hinatsu (*San'yas*): *Anis Tomiko* is the mother of *xan dlu'li'gas Mayumi*, family member by choice and a good friend. She is of Japanese and French ancestry and has been a beautiful support for the *Bak'wamkala* work happening through the school where she works and a good support to myself. She was also *San'yas*' teacher in preschool – an emerging immersion classroom at the *Gwa'sala-'Nakwaxda'xw* school *lax Ts'algwadi* where *xan sasamanu'xw* attend.



Figure 29: *Duḱwala gaḱan* (looking at me).
Ḳaḱutla'mas Anis Tomiko reading with *San'yas dlu'wis Ump* in their *Baḱwamkala* preschool classroom at the *Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw kaḱutla'elas lax Ts'algwadi*. *Katq'makwinuxw* - Yola, 2023

Ḳidilame, Robin Rosborough (C. *Mixala*): *Ḳidilame* is my peer within our nation and a fellow language warrior who I appreciate connecting with in regular conversations about our *Baḱwamkala* work. She is married into our *Dzawadaq'enuxw* nation and is a distant relative of *xan sasqm* through their *Ump's Kwagu'l* side. She is also the daughter of the late *Tlatlakul* Trish Rosborough who invited me to join this ILR Ph.D. program at UVic. *Ḳidilame* is the *Baḱwamkala* teacher at the *Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw* school C. *Mixala* and *San'yas* attend *lax Ts'algwadi*.



Figure 30: *K'a'yola* (telling stories, taking turns telling stories).
K'idilame reading to *Saṅ'yas* & *C. Miḡala laḡa Gwa'sala-'Nak'waxda'ḡw kaḡutla'elas laḡ Ts'algwadi*.
Kaṭa'makwinuḡw - *Yola*, 2023

Ts'itwalaga, Patricia Dawson Hunt (E. *Na'yi*): *Ts'itwalaga* is a distant relative of mine through our *Dzawada'enuḡw* and *Kwagu'l* side, she is also married into and residing in the *Kwagu'l* community of *Tsaxis*. *Ts'itwalaga* has obtained her teaching degree through UVic as part of a community collaboration to support the creation of *Bak'wamkala* teachers in our nation. *Ts'itwalaga* was E. *Na'yi*'s *Kwakwala/Bak'wamkala* teacher while she attended *Wagalus* school *laḡ Tsaxis* in her final grade 7 year.

Kaminḡwadzi, Pewi Alfred is a peer mentor for myself: *Kaminḡwadzi* is my peer and relative and has been a strong advocate for our language for many years. She is one of the most advanced second language learners of our *Bak'wamkala* of *Kwakwala*. *Kaminḡwadzi*

grew up *lax 'Yalis* and has recently relocated to *'Nalaxstala*, a close community to where I live. *Kamingawadzi* supported me in the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) as a mentor.

Lalxsan dala'ogwa, Keisha Everson, program coordinator for a family learning program: *Lalxsan dala'ogwa* is my peer and someone I connect to as a mother of young children learning and teaching our language. She has *Kwagu't* ancestry but resides in *Kumuxs'i*. *Lalxsan dala'ogwa* was a facilitator for the *'Wigaxan's Yakani'alap'e* (let's speak together) program that ran online for several years, open to family pods. She also was an instructor of the online *Kwakwala* course through North Island College that I attended with E. *Na'yi* and Scarlett.

Hawetlagwila, Isabel Seward (nee Robertson): *Hawetlagwila* is a first language speaker of our *Bakwamkala*. Her early years were spent growing up *lax Ukwanalis* and she later moved out to *Snuneymuxw* with her parents and became an interpreter for them. Isabel provided me with mentorship support as part of MAP and supported our community programming through VIU.

Xa'niyusame'ga, Nora Fred: *Xa'niyusame'ga* is a first language speaker of our *Bakwamkala* who currently resides in *Snuneymuxw*. Nora spent her childhood years *lax Kalugwis* and later moved out of this now empty village. Nora also provided me with mentorship support as part of MAP and supported our community group *lax Snuneymuxw*.

Thumasqn mu'la – I am really grateful... to these interviewees for each taking time to dialogue with me and for their energy in our *Bakwamkala* revitalization efforts. These interviews were insightful and provided a broader context to my overall learning and informed my doctoral research. I refer to these conversations throughout my dissertation.

Huttila

(listen)

Kakutla

(learn)

Listening and learning reflections from the interviews

These interviews took place from March to August 2023. I listened to, took notes and reflected on the interviews in June of 2025, more than two years after their recording due to unexpected delays resulting from changes in my life.

Interview *'Nam* (1) *dhu'wan dlu'ligas* Scarlett *laxa Snuneymuxw*:

This first interview was an endearing start to my interview process. I elicited responses from Scarlett regarding her history of *Kwakwala* learning, comparing learning in community to urban learning, inquired about the various projects she had taken part in, such as: our *'ma'makwayu* facebook initiative; our *'Wiga'xan's Wila Kakutlapa* – let's learn together video series (1-6); and our podcast with the *Nawalakw* Healing Society. I asked about how these experiences were and if anything stood out as being challenging, if there were any 'aha moments' or if there was anything that felt good. Scarlett shared of a time that was stressful during one of our learning sessions to do with washing dishes. While washing and drying dishes together I taught her the words for each of the dishes and then promptly asked her what each of them were called and this must have been too quick causing *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett stress. I appreciate this interview as it was an opportunity to reflect on our learning journey together and I was able to acknowledge her and express my appreciation for her participation while also acknowledging the challenging parts of it

all. We also reflected on a conversation about the status of our language and agreed this is an important dialogue to have with youth and perhaps older children.

Interview *Ma'l* (2) *dhu'wi Anis Tomiko*, Michelle Ann “*Tomiko*” *Hinatsu lax Ts'algwadi*:

This second interview with *San'yas*' emerging *Bak'wamkala* immersion preschool teacher (*Anis Tomiko* who is also our family and my good friend) was a rich dialogue that brought forward many insights. *Anis Tomiko* shared *San'yas* has a lot of our language within him and sees the world in a unique way. She can tell the language is within him, it is a comfort for him, and it is obvious he is familiar with our language. *Tomiko* noticed a huge growth in *San'yas* over the school year where he was exposed to *Bak'wamkala* in the classroom with a wide variety of stimulus in learning. In this interview I shared a turning point I noticed when I recognized that it was more important to ensure *San'yas* socio-emotional needs were taken care of over my need to stay in our language. “Being able to express himself (in english) he is happier and that enables him to also better speak in *Kwakwala*.” *Anis Tomiko* put forward that we speak (in any language) to connect and the importance of doing this work from a place of love. In her classroom she doesn't draw attention to how much of each language (*Bak'wamkala* and english) is used but to create space for more *Bak'wamkala*. Her perspective was reassuring as I was struggling to stay solely in the language with *San'yas* around this time.



Figure 31: *Lattān laxi kākūtł'a'elas* (I am going to school)!
Sgn'yas beginning the *Bakwamkala* preschool program at the *Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw kākūtł'a'elas lax Ts'algwadi*.
Kikatq'makw'inukw - Kākūtł'a'mas Anis Tomiko, 2022

Interview *Yudaxw* (3) *dhu'wi Kwak'wala K'akutla'mas - Tsitwalaga*, Patricia Dawson Hunt *lax*

Tsaxis:

My third interview was with E. *Na'yi*'s *Kwak'wala* teacher at the *Wagalus* school in *Tsaxis*. It was good to hear E. *Na'yi* often finished first in an online language game indicating she has good knowledge of our language and interesting to hear she does not put forward this knowing around her peers. *Tsitwalaga* shared about the different ways she teaches our language incorporating it into activities such as medicine gathering and processing for giveaway, button blanket making, fish raising and release, learning about ooligans as part of a trip to *Ukwanalis* (historically ooligans would make their way up our river and our people would make *thi'na* [ooligan oil] from them), *lahal*, teachings, prayers. It was so good to hear of all the beautiful ways *Tsitwalaga* was incorporating our language into culturally and seasonally relevant activities. *Tsitwalaga*'s use of teachings aligned with how I use language with E. *Na'yi* as my ability to speak in our *Bakwamkala* with her is depleted (in comparison with her younger siblings) but a way I can continue to incorporate our language is through sharing a teaching as part of my dialogue such as: *Ga'walapa* – help each other. At this interview *Tsitwalaga* gave me a handout of a prayer that I have since learned and been using in all my programs. It has had a huge impact on my wellness and is an integral part of how I run my classes. This idea of teaching students how to open a gathering with prayer came from this interview. *Tsitwalaga* shared about her journey in going back to school to become a *Kwak'wala* teacher and that she “felt like something was always missing” and found her missing link through her *Bakwamkala* journey. In this interview I shared how I feel I need to do more for E. *Na'yi* as her younger siblings get much more of our language from me.

***Hawa'x'ala Kamdam* (prayer song) ***

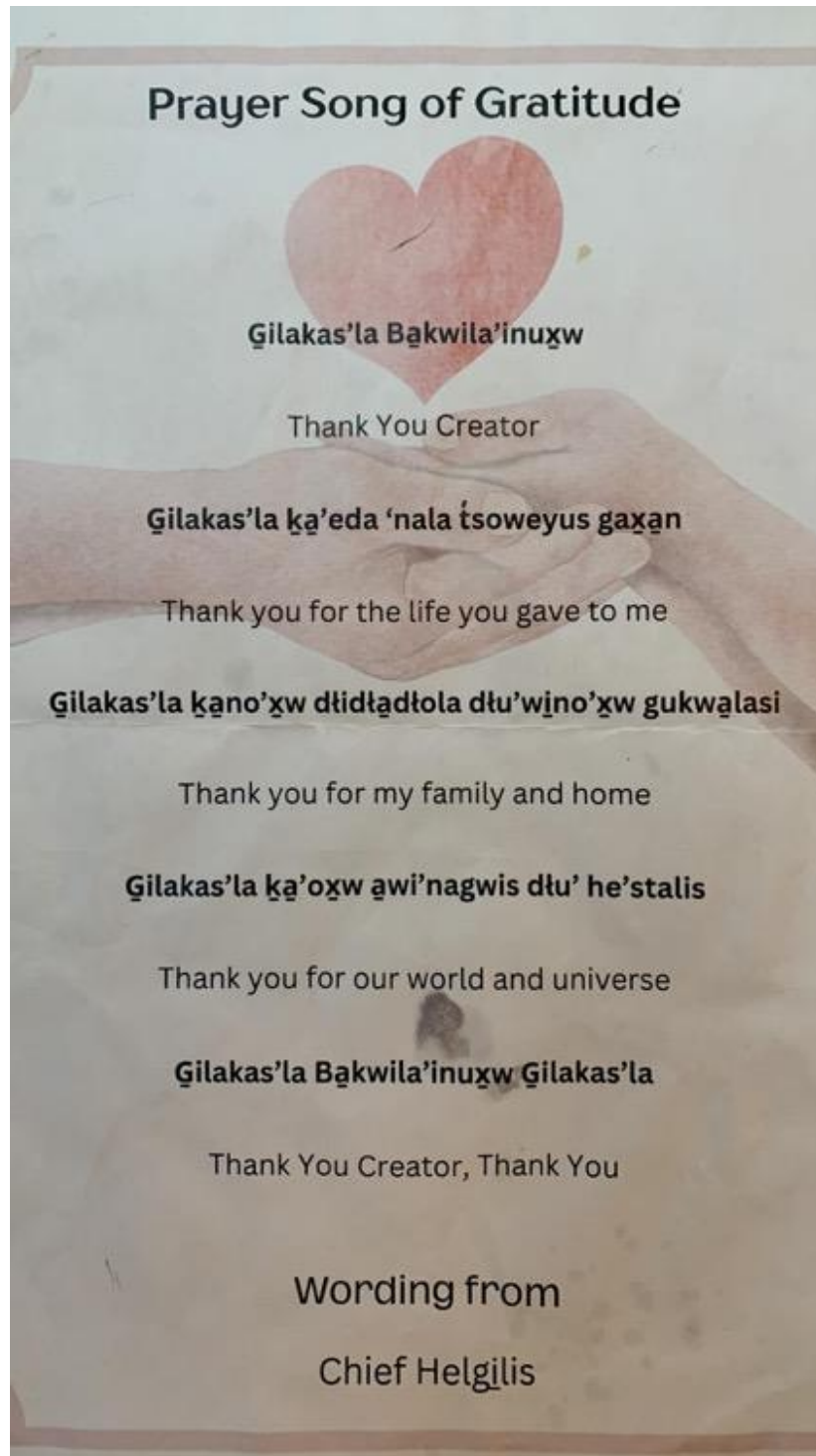


Figure 32: *Hawa'x'ala Kamdam* (prayer song).

A well utilized copy of the *hawa'x'ala kamdam* given to me by *Tsıłwalaga*, Patricia Dawson Hunt inspiring my use of it in the *Bakwamkala* programs I facilitate. *Kikatą'makw'inuᖃw - Yola, 2023*

Interview Mu (4) *dlu'wi Bakwamkala Kaku'la'mas Kidilame*, Robin Rosborough *lax Tsalgwadi*:

My 4th interview was with Robin, the *Bakwamkala* teacher at the *Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw* school in *Tsalgwadi*. It was good to hear feedback about both of my children but especially regarding C. *Mixala*. Robin shared C. *Mixala* can put words the rest of class is just learning into phrases, if working in teams her team tends to do well and is often called upon by others including teachers. C. *Mixala* also puts forward dialect differences and usually sticks with what she has previously learned in our home whereas *San'yas* will go with what is being taught in the classroom. In relation to this I remember a time in this same year where *San'yas* spoke back to my “*walas (big)*” with “*u'mas (big)*” a dialect difference learned at school, as well as “correcting” me on my pronunciation of “*Ba'as*” the following year when his kindergarten class took a trip to this ancestral site of the *Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw*. We discussed the confidence C. *Mixala's* *Bakwamkala* ability brings her and my wonder and slight worry about the possibility of it bringing too much confidence. Robin reassured me this is not something she has witnessed in the classroom. Both C. *Mixala* and *San'yas* love to sing in our language. C. *Mixala* often uses her name *Mixala*... “it means dream, but don't call me dream, call me *Mixala*.” Robin commented on the use of books, other kids will request the *Bakwamkala* books be read ‘normal’ (in english) but *Mixala* & *San'yas* don't (although *Mixala* sometimes requests english in the reading of our *Bakwamkala* books at home). This interview was a meaningful discussion on many aspects of this revitalization work. Robin shared of a community member commenting towards me, “there's that lady who speaks *Bakwamkala* to her kids all the time, I wish I was one of her kids.”

Interview *Saka* (5) *dlu'wi Kaminawadzi*, Pewi Alfred *laxa 'Nalaxstala*:

Kaminawadzi provided MAP support for me over social media and direct messages. She commented on what she noticed, over the course of our facebook projects spanning 3.5 years, with each of *xan's sasqm* and how it was neat to see *San'yas* go from crying in the background of many videos to asserting his desire to have his turn in the learning videos, she noticed C. *Mixqala* is very engaged and E. *Na'yi* was previously in the flow but seems to have lost interest, yet she is aware that it is related to her age and she will come back to it in the future. *Kaminawadzi* commented on how I make them speak our language back to me rather than just allowing for an english response. She also shared that helping me helps her to learn, reaffirming how we all can learn from each other. I expressed appreciation to *Kaminawadzi* for her support, how she could give specific feedback on my sounds “you are making this sound, but it should be this other sound”. Although MAP was initially meant to be with a first language speaker, learning from an advanced learner/second language speaker such as *Kaminawadzi* can have some good and differing benefits. In summary, this was a good dialogue on various aspects of teaching and learning, including sharing of different strategies from *Kaminawadzi* acknowledging teacher stagnation and the need to find ways to keep you inspired and that mistakes are par for the course. *Kaminawadzi* also put forward how resource creation doesn't necessarily lead to full learning and this has been my experience with our 20 books and the *mamakwayu* project. Although I was the one to translate the 20 books, I am still learning the phrases in the books 5+ years later and while we ran the *mamakwayu* project for 3+ years I still don't quite know all the months very well. (*dlu'li'gas* Scarlett also brought this up.)



Figure 33: *'Wigax̱n's Yaḱaṉtalape* (let us all speak together)!
Sgn'yas, C. Miḱala & E. Na'yi at an in-person gathering *laxa Courtney* with the *'Wigax̱n's Yaḱaṉtalape* family-based program facilitated by *Laḻxs̱n dala'ogwa*, Keisha Everson. *Kikata'makw'inuḱw - Yola*, 2021

Interview *Ḵaṯla* (6) *dhu'wi Laḻxs̱n dala'ogwa*, Keisha Everson *laxa Ḵumuxs'i*:

In this interview the following topics were covered: family-based learning, catering to different ages and stages within one program, online games for teens, not hiding motherhood from programming. *Laḻxs̱n dala'ogwa* shared “if baby needs to nurse, I’m not gonna make her wait 45 minutes till class is over.” We had a substantial discussion on how we as facilitators come with our children as a “package deal” but not all programs are supportive of children or babies attending. We shared an insightful dialogue on

seasonal learning and how this could be culturally relevant to us as *Bakwam* learners today and how to honor that flow in a more sustainable way over our life journey. We also discussed challenges of ‘one parent’ learning and teaching within household. Several important topics came from this interview: 1) welcoming learning spaces for families - parents with children/babies; 2) creating a seasonal flow for learning and acknowledging *Bakwamkala* learning is a lifetime journey requiring a sustainable plan; 3) one parent learning and teaching household is an area of significance for our language.

Interview *Adlabu* (7) *dlu'wi Ni'noxsola Hawetlagwila* (Isabel (nee Robertson) Seward) & *Xa'niyusame'ga* (Nora Fred) *laxa Snuneymuxw*:

In my conversation with Isabel and Nora, two of my Elder mentors who are first language speakers, they shared a great deal about their experiences of day school while living in their respective villages and about the overall negative impacts from the residential school system on our people. They shared personal stories of their harms from attending the day schools and how this interconnected with language use. *Hawetlagwila* attended day school *lax Ukwanalis* where she was not allowed to speak our *Bakwamkala* at school and then not allowed to speak english at home. *Xa'niyusame'ga* attended day school *lax Kalugwis* where she also was not allowed to speak *Kwakwala* at school and only spoke it in their family home. *Xa'niyusame'ga* shared an experience of standing on a box as a child and having to write, “I will not speak my language again” 500x. *Hawetlagwila* shared, “I was punished for speaking our language at school and got in trouble for speaking english at home.” *Hawetlagwila* shared that even though her parents and others didn’t attend residential school “they got sucked into it” as they would come home and

treat others the way they had been treated. Both *Hawetlagwila* and *Xa'niyusame'ga* expressed feeling encouraged and appreciating the experience of being a part of our language reclamation work. *Hawetlagwila* shared it is good to see the interest and how our ways of being are coming back to us – language, culture and how we treat each other. *Xa'niyusame'ga* shared a few phrases that stood out to me “you lifted us up,” “you showed us a way” and “you are brave.” Despite some stressful parts of the translation work they both maintained a positive outlook on the projects we completed together. *Hawetlagwila* shared, “every now and then I look at it (the books) and think “I really did this!” ... “now, what did I do?” laughing at herself and her uncertainty in what she translated. *Xa'niyusame'ga* shared that it was frustrating and if not for *Tlatlasimo'ga*, Sally Williams (her neighbor and another first language speaker who supported our book project), “I would have given up” but also expressed it is something to be proud of. In this conversation I asked how could you say, “I stay ready” and *Xa'niyusame'ga* shared “*O'am hayulis gwalala* – always ready”.



Figure 34: *O'am hayulis gwalata* (I am always ready)!
Ni'noxsola Xa'niyusame'ga, Nora Fred and *Hawetagwila* - Isabel (Robertson) Seward at our conversational
interview *laxa Snuneymuxw. Kikata'makw'inuḡw* - Yola, 2023

Interview *Ma'lgwa'nal* (8) *dlu'wi* E. *Na'yi* & *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett *laxa Tsamas*:

I began this conversational interview asking them about their experience of learning our language while participating in a paddle program in our territory. This was a second interview for *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett. It sounded like a positive experience and preferable to classroom learning. They shared that they learned more about how to introduce themselves during the paddle program. I asked how this felt for them, and they seemed indifferent. Throughout the interview we discussed the various parts of language learning and some specific to our journey (with mostly me speaking, and them hopefully listening, and sometimes responding). I spent a lot of time encouraging, acknowledging and putting my hopes forward for the future of their involvement with our language. I put forward the idea of viewing our language as a loved one and how I find english to be a lame language in comparison with our beautiful *Bakwamkala*. I discussed shifting from activity-based learning to natural use within home, requesting they be welcoming of my use of our language with them and mindful of responses. I acknowledged the big work we are doing and the positive impact it is having and encouraged them to consciously take in learning and to use what they can with C. *Mixala* and *San'yas*. I also discussed the benefits of learning and encouragement with multilingualism and learning a 3rd language when and if possible. We dialogued about the shift in worldview that comes from learning a new language and how it helps us to understand various ways of being in the world and I stated how it “helps you to live life in a better way”, as our *mamakwayu* (calendar) project was coming to an end I inquired about ways to keep language learning going, especially for *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett who was now living away from us.

This interview highlights the challenges in youth engagement and loss of interest that may occur if living away from homeland community and/or not having a community of learners in your vicinity. In this interview I put forward to E. *Na'yi* what had come forward in my interview with her *Kwakwala* teacher, that she shared E. *Na'yi* holds much more knowledge of our *Bakwamkala* than she is comfortable sharing with her peers. I encouraged her to use what she knows, to be proud of it and to help normalize it. We discussed my use of only our language with *San'yas* up till that summer and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett commented, “it’s weird to only speak *Kwakwala* to him when you’re not fluent.” I remember what this comment felt like in my body and it was a hard hit, but thankfully I maintained my composure and my response back to *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett was insightful and a good dialogue. (At a later time, not in this interview, C. *Mixqala* said to me, “It’s weird when you speak english to *San'yas* because you usually speak *Kwakwala*”). I offered lots of encouragement to both E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett in continuing with their use of our *Bakwamkala* and reassuring them that speaking with me and within our household is a safe and supportive space. Scarlett shared about the awkwardness of using our language with those who aren’t connected to our language. I acknowledged this and related with my experiences of attempting to use our language in soccer sharing of two separate experiences: one with an adult team where it felt awkward and a bit discouraging and the other with children where they just naturally picked it up and used the language following my lead. I highlighted how some spaces, places, people will feel and flow better for our language use.



Figure 35: *Wawalkinala* (receiving a gift).

In my interview *du'wgn nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Mìxgla* she says, "our language is a gift, a very special gift."
C. Mìxgla at the Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis*. *Kikatq'makw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Interview *Na'na'ma* (9) *dhu'wi* C. *Mixqala laxa T'samas*:

C. *Mixqala* shared, “Our language is a gift, a very special gift and not everyone gets this gift, and I feel bad for those that don't.” This short but sweet interview with C. *Mixqala* contained a very strong message of our language being a gift. She also put forward that it is “a part of life” and maintained a very positive outlook of our language and her experience of language learning. She remembers learning since *San'yas* was a baby (she was two when he was born) but in this interview I shared with her how she was a part of a language nest in her first two years of life, so has also been hearing our language since infancy.

While listening to and reflecting on all *na'na'ma* (9) interviews *ma'l* (2) years after their initial recording was meaningful, these last two interviews with *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett & E. *Na'yi* (interviewed together) and then with C. *Mixqala* stood out to me as to the diverse perspectives of children and youth involved in ancestral language reclamation. *Dhu'li'gas* Scarlett & E. *Na'yi* ages *malagayu* (12) and *yudaxwagayu* (13) at the time were beginning to lose interest and this is evident comparing this interview to the following podcast from when they were *la'stu* (10) and *namagayu* (11) and fully involved. C. *Mixqala* age *adlabu* (7) at the time maintains a positive outlook and deep engagement in *xan's Bakwamkala*.

In 2021 myself, E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett were interviewed by *Malidi*, Sydney Roberts, who was a part of *Nawalakw* Healing Society at the time. A podcast was created from this interview and exists on youtube listed under '*nqamakala* radio episode 1: Yola, Emaeya, Scarlett. https://youtu.be/RFnstl-b7JM?si=ohP41cOIcs1FX_IE



Figure 36: 'namak'ala Radio Episode 1: Yola, Emaeya and Scarlett

As part of my self-study, I listened to this podcast in the summer of 2025 for the first time since its recording 4 years ago. What a profound experience to hear this dialogue, E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett's younger voices, and to be reminded of all the *Bak'wamk'ala* work projects we completed during this time of intensive learning. The three of us were on a zoom in my 'office closet' in our small townhouse *laxa Snuneymuxw* during covid times. In this podcast E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett practiced their introductions, we went over their history of language learning – learning in community to start and then our move down island to urban areas, we touched on the differences of learning in community compared to learning in an urban setting. An interesting perspective brought forward by one of the girls was how our language learning picked up during covid, and I elaborated on this sharing how we were forced to bring our learning into our home (as we were no longer able to be in community). *Malidi* inquired about the girl's favorite way to learn, and they shared about puppets and zooms with food (at the time we were joining a

monthly zoom with our family pods and the program provided us with food money and we usually got takeout which was a treat for our household). A family activity fail was discussed (an activity put forward by the program we were a part of) an unsuccessful attempt to play Uno all together and from this realized the difficulty in engaging in this game as a language learning activity with children varying in ages 2, 4, 10 and 11 and that we would be better able to do activities using a buddy system pairing the littles (2 and 4) and the bigs (10 and 11) together. We shared about the online *Kwakwala* course with North Island College they attended with me (a beginner course that ran one evening per week over the course of the summer) and as their final project they each completed a stop motion video and recorded their own audio using First Voices as a resource. The need for a better way to archive our creations (and this is still a need 4 years later) came up in this discussion. *Mglidi* acknowledged the concept of *Kwakwala* media and our contributions to this, we also discussed the *Kwakwala* *kas'ane'* (shirts) that I included as part of our social media projects, gifting these to participants as “work shirts” to be worn in videos. We discussed the inclusion of *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett who would spend time regularly and was our bonus child at the time taking part in all our language learning initiatives. In reflecting back on this I realize how it was a special time for our family inclusive of *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett and helpful for E. *Na'yi* to have a buddy and vice versa in this work. Now that *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett lives away from us both her and E. *Na'yi* seem to have drifted away from their involvement in our *Bakwamkala* efforts. It was brought forward my booking holiday rental homes in various places near *Snuneymuxw* as part of our wellness during covid times, but this also supported language learning inspiration. When asked what their favorite place to visit the *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett and

E. Na'yi referred to *Tsaxis*, and I shared about a two-hour walkabout during our last visit to *Tsaxis* where we were able to stay in our language for 75% of the time.



Figure 37: 'Wiga'o'gmx (just do it)! Ha'nal'la (keep going, doing what you're doing, keep on)! In the podcast with *Namakala* (to speak as one) radio E. Na'yi (age 10) says “just suck it up and get through it!” followed by *dlu'li'gas Scarlett* (age 11) “it's hard but just do it” as words of advice for *Bakwamkala* learners. *Kikata'makw ka'e* E. Na'yi (left) & *dlu'li'gas Scarlett* (right) *laxa* Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis*. *Katmakw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Tsaxis provided a great deal of stimulus with the beach, the village, the graveyard, the bighouse, and all the poles and cultural artifacts visible in all these locations. *Malidi* put forward how we were “walking like our ancestors did.” We shared about the start-up of soccer Thursdays as part of our *Bakwǫmkala* learning and in our first session I mostly went over soccer vocab and we didn’t get to much soccer (not shared in this podcast I remember I became frustrated with E. *Na’yi* because she didn’t seem focused on the soccer drills we were attempting and so soccer Thursdays did not go on for too long). I shared about TikTok videos we created as part of some youth challenge, and we went around places of significance in *Snuneymuxw* learning and using our language but referring to the places in the *Hulqwimum* language. This was a profound project for me as it helped me to find my grounding in my desire for authentic land-based learning in the lands of another nation. This project with the TikTok videos led to creating a substantial number of videos for posting on facebook. *Dlu’li’gas* Scarlett shared about wanting to use more of our language in her household (which was an interesting shift later in the interviews where she did not seem to have much interest), natural learning was brought up (this has come up other times) where I shifted from projects/activities/programs and just started using language to the best of my ability and this is currently where I am at now. I shared of a time I lost my patience during the recording of a video for one of our facebook projects and wound up filming my crotch for an extended time while lecturing *xan’s sasqm* in english for lack of focus and engagement. *Malidi* asked “why is language important to you?” and E. *Na’yi* responded “because it is important to my mom.” I asked, “how does it make you feel?” and *dhu’li’gas* Scarlett’s response was “sometimes it’s easy, sometimes it’s hard, sometimes it’s fun.” *Malidi* asked for last words of advice and E. *Na’yi* put forward “suck it up and get through it” and *dhu’li’gas* Scarlett said, “it’s hard but just do it”. The importance of chapstick, water and food as

part of *Bakwamkala* learning was also emphasized by the *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* as concluding comments in this podcast.



Figure 38: *Ax'atqluda's xus tsep* (put on your dance apron).
Nugwa'am Yola tying a *tsep* onto *xan nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Mixela lax Tsaxis tlqama'is*,
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Ax'exsdanuxwex Kw'alesanuxwex Kwak'wala (we want Kwak'wala to live)! Video

My hope for this video is to encourage ancestral language reclamation as part of healing and holistic wellness as well as safe and supportive spaces for learning. It was initially created for one of my candidacy exams while living in *Snuneymuxw*. I share personal and community challenges and positives related to language learning. The video is informational but also a resource with examples of an opening, an introduction of self, key phrases, and a song. It shares some statistics for our language and parts that I have found helpful in incorporating, such as, song, yoga, land connection and gratitude.

Video link here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/gslb1pgjc8z6jex5k1yki/Yola.mp4?rlkey=foh39u0bfydne746uravr9lrd&e=1&st=ul5h20p3&dl=0>

The video will be used to connect with others in hopes of inspiring Bakwamkala reclamation. I have also conducted the interviews with household and other family and community members to engage and encourage them in this journey.

Łaxwe'gila

(strength, gaining/building)

Āma'ya'nakwala

(smaller, gradually getting)

Summary of *Ma'ł* (2) - Connecting to *Li'laxwal*

This section begins with descriptions of those I interviewed as part of my doctoral research including *xan sasam: dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, E. *Na'yi* & C. *Mixala*. I had also planned to interview *San'yas* but realized it did not make sense to interview him on the journey of learning our *Bak'wamkala* when he has been immersed in it since infancy. I believe this is a positive highlight in my simultaneous doctoral and household language learning journey and research. I describe my connections to *Anis Tomiko* – *San'yas*' emerging immersion *Bak'wamkala* preschool program *kakutla'mas* (teacher) as well as a good friend and family member, and *Kidilame*, Robin – the *Bak'wamkala kakutla'mas lax Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw* school where *xan sasamanu'xw* (C. *Mixala* & *San'yas*) attend, a peer and extended family member of *xan sasam* and the daughter of the *Tlatlakul'wale'*, the late Trish Rosborough, who was instrumental in both my *Bak'wamkala* and doctoral paths and who I honor in the *tsepila* framework of this written piece. I also share about *Tsitwalaga*, Pat – the *Kwakwala kakutla'mas lax Wagalus* school where E. *Na'yi* attended and an extended family member of mine. I refer to two peers who have supported me and my household in our language learning, *Kaminawadzi*, Pewi, a highly advanced learner of our language who has been learning and teaching for over 25 years and provided support to me through the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) also a family member, and *Lalxan dala'ogwa*, Keisha, a facilitator of the *'Wiga'xan's Yakant'alape* (let's speak together) online family learning

program. Lastly, I speak to my relationships with *xan's Ni'noxsola* (our wise ones) *Hawetlagwila*, Isabel and *Xa'niyusame'ga*, Nora, first language speakers of our language who were a beautiful support to myself, my household and to our community learning in *Snuneymuxw*.

I then summarize each of the interviews in order of occurrence:

- 1) *Dlu'li'gas* Scarlett – this was my very first interview and a gentle warm up for the rest of the conversations acknowledging *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett, our bonus child during our intensive period of learning, for her participation in our household efforts.
- 2) *Anis Tomiko* (*Kakutla'mas ka'e San'yas*), in this interview *Anis Tomiko* highlights the following about *San'yas*: she can tell I of our language lives inside of him, he is very familiar with and comforted by *xan's Bakwamkala* and sees the world uniquely. *Anis Tomiko* also noticed a huge growth in him over the school year while exposed to a wide variety of stimulus accompanied by *Bakwamkala*. I spoke to my realization that *San'yas'* socio-emotional needs needed to come first before my desire to speak solely in our language to him. *Anis Tomiko* aligned with the importance of this and put forward love and connection are integral to communication in any language. In her classroom the aim is to continually make more space for *Bakwamkala* not paying attention to how much of each language is used.
- 3) *Tsitwalaga, Pat* (*Kwakwala kakutla'mas lax Wagalus school* where E. Na'yi attended), In this interview *Tsitwalaga* let me know E. Na'yi often finishes first in an online game indicating her knowledge of *xan's Bakwamkala* but she does not share this with her peers during class. *Tsitwalaga* described a variety of activities she incorporates into her *Kwakwala* class including our *hawa'x'ala* (prayer) and the intention to provide students with the ability to open a gathering in this way. *Tsitwalaga* provided a hard copy of a

hawa'x'ala for me to take home, and I took inspiration from this and have since been using this prayer in my programs and within my household daily.

4) *Kidilame*, Robin (*Bakwamkala kakutla'mas lax Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw* school where C. *Mixala* & *San'yas* attend), In this interview *Kidilame* shared the following about C.

Mixala: she can put words into phrases other students are just learning, her group tends to do well during group learning and is often turned to by others including teachers for support. *Kidilame* shared both C. *Mixala* & *San'yas* love to sing and are familiar with the use of *Bakwamkala* books and highlighted a community members comment towards me "there's that lady who always speaks *Bakwamkala* to her kids, I wish I was one of her kids."

All three interviews *dlu'wan sasqm's Kwakwala/Bakwamkala kakutla'mas* provided insight into how my efforts at home were/are showing up at school, how language learning inputs were appearing as outputs in the spaces where our language is being taught. I was unsure if there would be any noticeable difference but was reassured by all three teachers that *xan sasqm's* absorption, understanding and use of *xan's Bakwamkala* was apparent.

5) *Kaminawadzi*, Pewi – In this interview *Kaminawadzi* commented on the increase of interest and engagement of *San'yas* (from 1.5 years till about 5 years old), the steady interest and engagement of C. *Mixala* (from 3.5 years till just over 7 years old) and the decrease in interest of E. *Na'yi* (from 9 to 12.5 years old) she noticed over the course of our facebook projects (which ran 3.5 years). The rest of this conversation was mostly a dialogue about the vastness of learning and teaching, its highs and lows and the importance of continuing.

- 6) *Lalxan Dala'ogwa*, Keisha - in this interview some poignant points came forward including the importance of family-friendly programming as not all are welcoming of young children, a seasonal approach to sustainable learning throughout the year and the challenges of one parent/person being the sole carrier for bringing language forward in a household.
- 7) *Hawetlagwila*, Isabel & *Xa'niyusame'ga*, Nora - a solid portion of this interview was sharing from both as to the impacts of attending day school and its negative impact on them, our people and our language. They also share of the positive influence our *Bakwamkala* initiatives have had on them and how it has uplifted their spirits and how we are remembering how to love and care for one another again.
- 8) E. *Na'yi & Dhu'li'gas* Scarlett - mostly a *dlixs'ala* from me to them of the many good reasons to learn our ancestral language, also acknowledging them for their participation and encouraging them with carrying on in learning and using our *Bakwamkala*.
- 9) C. *Mixala* - in this short but oh-so-sweet interview with C. *Mixala*, who had just turned *adlqbu'qxila* (seven years old) three days earlier, she shares a strong message that our language is a very special gift.

In conducting these interviews, I anticipated insight coming from the interviews but instead I gained more of my own insights from the dialogue.

Podcast reflection - *Namakala* radio, *Nawalakw* Healing Society

I was amazed to reflect on all the work and efforts we were making during this time of covid. Our language learning picked up during this period, and we were forced to bring language into home. The benefits of a “buddy system” – came forward in this podcast for

xan sasam pairing *dhu'ligas* Scarlett with E. *Na'yi* and C. *Mixala* with *San'yas*, but also have come to know it is helpful for those of us (adults) heavily involved in *Bak'wamkala* language revitalization to have someone to work with providing a supportive relationship to navigate the trials and tribulations of this field. The notion of “stimuli” came up in this conversation – referring to our getaway trips staying in airbnbs and how they provided fresh stimuli for language learning in the home, also referencing a trip to *Tsaxis* (while living in *Snuneymuxw*) and a walkabout the village where the girls and I were able to stay in our language for about 75% for the 2ish hours due to the rich cultural stimuli visible in community such as carved poles. The interview regarding *San'yas' Bak'wamkala* preschool also speaks to the role of varied stimuli including changes of scenery and diverse activities to promote learning and keep things interesting. This podcast highlighted some fails and some successes which seems par for the course in ancestral language reclamation. Both *dhu'ligas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* were deeply engaged in learning at this time, at the ages of 10 and 11, but when interviewed two years later had significantly lost interest at 12 and 13 years of age.

Video – *Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesanukwex Kwak'wala* (we want *Kwak'wala* to live)!

This video encapsulates both the positive and negative experiences of reclaiming an endangered ancestral language. I will use it to share my/our experience with family and community in hopes of inspiring others in this reclamation work.

Tsepila, Yudaxw #3 – Create a design connecting to family storying & storywork

Angwa (who are you)?

Nugwa'am (I'm...)

'namyut (family)

Nuyam (story)

- In this section **I share deeply of my *Bakwamkala* journey in relation to *xan sasam***, it contains **family storying and storywork**, my experience of “**raising children with ancestral language**”
- how we ***kakutlapa*** (learn together), and our restorative experiences of ***sanala*** (being whole).



Figure 39: *Tla'yala* (bead(s))!
Progress of *tla'yala* design on the *tsep*. *Katq'makwinuxw* - Yola, 2024

In this section I relate the design of the *Tsep* to family story (storywork/storying) and include the terms: *Angwa* (who are you)?, *Nugwa'aII* am...), '*namyut* (family), & *Nuyam* (story) as these are terms used to dialogue about who you are, where you come from and who you connect to. The design on the *Tsep* often relates to your family history and here I am relating it to our household family story of ancestral language reclamation. A significant amount of storywork and storying has taken place for *xan sasam* and I as part of this research. We have learned together *Kakutlapa* (learning together) and experienced restoration *Sanala* (to be whole) as part of this journey.

'wiga'x̄an's 'wi'la k̄akutl̄apa
(let us learn together)!

“Raising children” with *Kwakwala* as a second language learner is not the best fit for me as it sounds predetermined and certain. I didn’t set out to raise *x̄an sas̄am* with our ancestral language although they influenced me greatly in this journey. *X̄an sas̄am* provide an in-house community of learners enabling me to progress my speaking in a way not possible if living and learning solo. So, although I have been “teaching” *x̄an sas̄am*, having them to practice with daily is also critical to my learning and speech development. I struggle with this term of “teaching” as it indicates I am an expert, when I am not, and it is more of bringing the language forward into our household. Therefore, we are learning together and collaboratively bringing our language to life within our family home.

'n̄mukwala
(one speaker, only one speaking)

Family challenges of one parent learning and teaching

This came up in the interview with *Lal̄x̄san dala'ogwa*, Keisha Everson, as we have experienced similar challenges in being the sole carrier for bringing the language forward within our household family. Similarly, a family featured in *Rising Voices, Hothaninpi* – Revitalizing the Lakota language highlights one parent who is actively learning “staying up till midnight” with self-directed learning while the other parent is pregnant with fourth child, kids, job, part-time business and “just does not have energy to be disciplined enough to learn at this time” (The Language Conservancy, 2016, 46:45).

Ugwakala
(different)

Catering to the different ages and stages of *xan sasam*



Figure 40: *K'wisux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today)!
Nugwa'gm Yola dlu'wan sasam E. Na'yi, C. Mixala & Sgn'yas in the snowfall *lax Gwa'dzi'*,
Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2022

It is big work catering to *xan sasam Bak'wamk'ala* learning needs as each requires something different. With the younger two I can use much of the same vocabulary, although each of their responses are unique from one another. The eldest has completely different needs than her younger siblings and as I am finding parenting a teen to be an unknown frontier, I am also finding it an added challenge to best support her *Kwak'wala* needs. There have been many shifts in our family life, like in our *Bak'wamk'ala* journey, and it seems an ongoing obstacle course where stamina to navigate a pathway through is a must. A *Skwxwú7mesh* man, Aaron Williams, who was an Apprentice in the Mentor-Apprentice Program speaks to the “need to be highly

motivated” (George, et al., 2016, 128:22). *Sən'yas' Kəkutla'mas Anis Tomiko* expresses admiration of my stamina in our conversational interview.

At this point most of my *Bakwamkala/Kwakwala* use is with the younger two (now 7 and 9) who require the most care, have the same daily routines and attend the same school. In 2020 I facilitated the video series project “‘wiga'xan's 'wila *kakutlapa* – let us learn together!” with 6 youtube videos for kids by kids. There are *Kwakwala* basics (numbers, colors, simple introductions etc.) in the first three videos and routines in preparation for the school day, mealtime, and bath/bedtime in the last three. At that time, I was seeking the language needed for these daily routines to use within our household with *xan sasam* (then 2 and 4). This language continues to be the basis of our *Bakwamkala* use in our home to this day and includes many commands. My younger two also receive exposure to our language at their community school at least 3 times per week.

Xan kwalyakwaga'yi my eldest daughter receives much less *Kwakwala* from me as she can move herself through her day of her own accord (sometimes with some needed prodding). I continue to use basic greetings such as: *ikux xwa ga'alax* – it is a good morning, *tsax'idaga* – get up, *higa laxa kakutla'as* – go to school, *ikla xus 'nalax* – have a good day, *laxwala'nukwanthus* – love I have for you, *'Wixas xwa 'nalax* – how is your day?, *ikla xus mix'ida* – have a good sleep, *gilakas'la* – greeting/thank you, *halakas'la* – good bye. I find I am having to *dlis'ala* (teach/lovingly lecture) her in english as I do not have the ability to do so in our *Bakwamkala*. But then will put forward a teaching such as: *Maya'xalap'a* – respect one another, *Laxwalap'a* – love one another, *Ga'walap'a* – help one another, *A'exsilap'a* – take care of one another, that aligns with what I have said in my *dlis'ala*. We communicate a lot through text message, and I try to do so in our language as much as possible. This is a newer and unique shift in our *Bakwamkala*

use with each other. E. Na'yi has access to a *Kwak'wala* course at her public high school and has attended online programming with me off and on throughout the years.

Others attempting to raise children in their language have opted to home-school their children. The *Tolowa Dee'ni'* family from California (Bommelyn, 2019) is a wonderful example of how this “family has created a “language nest” for their children: an immersive environment in which they are growing up surrounded by language, culture, and ancestral lands of the *Tolowa Dee-ni'* people.” The possibility of home-schooling crossed my mind, but we all benefit from *x̱an sas̱m* attending public/community school. I understand it may be better able to raise *x̱an sas̱m* in our *Bakw̱amḵala* if I were to home school. But I need some separate time for my own *Kwak'wala* learning and do paid work as well as need some personal time, which enables me to be a better parent overall. I accept that raising *x̱an sas̱m* with our language (and not in) is what is realistic for us.



Figure 41: *Ḵaḵaḡax̱wsilas* (you are reading)!

E. Na'yi, *ḏlu'li'gas* Scarlett, *S̱an'yas* (holding one of our *Kwak'wala/Bakw̱amḵala* books) & C. *Mix̱gla* at the Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis*, *Kiḵaṯa'makwinukw - Ti'li'nukw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

I'ugwakala
(all different)

Each child's *Kwakwala* development differs depending on where I was at in my journey when each were born.



Figure 42: *Su'man kwala'yu*(you are my reason for living).
Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wan alumas Wa'yugwamala C. Mixala & E. Na'yi in our *yayaxwsam* regalia *lax Dłaksiwe' tlamais, Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

I recall sharing the benefits of bilingualism and raising babies with multiple languages with *xan galma'yudłami E. Na'yi* about and her response was “so *San'yas* is going to be smarter than the rest of us!” Her reaction was both humorous and endearing. I went on to explain we will all benefit from learning *Kwakwala* not just *San'yas* who was a young toddler at the time. I do believe *San'yas* will experience the greatest benefits as he has received the most exposure to our *Bakwamkala* from 10 months till now (7 years of age). *C. Mixala* is a close second as she was a

part of a language nest for her first two years of life and has continued to receive a substantial amount of *Kwakwala* throughout her childhood years up till now (age of 9). E. *Na'yi* received much less of our *Bakwamkala* within our household during her childhood but was exposed during her elementary years from preschool to grade 2 and then again in grade 7. She has also attended online programming, completing a *Kwakwala* course through North Island College and has participated in other online offerings through North Island College, UVic and numerous community programs, with my support.

SXEDFELISIYE, Renee Sampson, a Language Champion for *SENĆOFEN* (and a former soccer teammate) shares a similar experience, “our daughters represent where we were at in our language learning journey, you can see with their language understanding and comprehension where we were at in our language learning” (*JSINTEN*, et al., 2021, 56:45) and how her “oldest daughter feels like she was ripped off” (Swallow & Sampson, 2019, 14:59) as she was already in school when their family began their journey. I recently crossed paths with *SXEDFELISIYE* and her eldest daughter at a Mentor-Apprentice Gathering and the two of them are working together in this program to fill-in the gaps of her eldest’s *SENĆOFEN*. As part of their learning demonstration her eldest daughter shared a prayer and sang a song and *SXEDFELISIYE* spoke to her experience. This was an incredibly heartfelt sharing that resonated with me and provided hope for future possibilities with my eldest daughter.



Figure 43: *Su'man hasdaxla'yu* (you are my reason for breathing).
Nugwa'gm Yola dlu'wan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi during her *Ixgntsila* ceremonial week *lax Dlgksiwe' tlgama'is*,
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Lats'o

(to go in)

Lawq'li

(to go out)

Inputs/outputs

It is fascinating to notice the diversity in *xan sasam* outputs in relation to their *Kwakwala* inputs. It seems the long-term rewards will be revealed over time. *Ho-chunk* language learner and teacher puts forward it is “too early to tell” (Blackdeer, 2020, 2:38), regarding their language revitalization efforts and I believe this to be true for us also. Only time will tell or show the accumulation of outputs from my labour of inputs. I am also not able to see the full extent of how my children express their *Bakwamkala* currently. It was profound to hear how their *Kwakwala*

use has showed itself in the classroom during the interviews I carried out with their *Bakwamk'ala* teachers. All three could see evidence of *Kwakwala* knowledge and use. E. *Na'yi*'s *Kwakwala* teacher shared that although not demonstrated in front of her peers, an online game revealed she had a substantial amount of *Kwakwala* knowledge as she often finished first. C. *Mixala*'s teacher shared she was able to put together phrases when her classmates were just learning the words. *San'yas*' teacher can tell it is a normal experience for him to hear *Kwakwala/Bakwamkala* as he doesn't ask, "what does that mean?" or respond in a way indicating lack of understanding as the other children do.

Recently *San'yas* has been responding to me in *Kwakwala* and has started to catch his english reply and will switch to *Kwakwala* on his own (without me prompting him). C. *Mixala* recently read me a few *Kwakwala* books! Previously she wasn't totally on board with reading in *Kwakwala* and we would negotiate how the reading would go (*Kwakwala* and english mixed, just *Kwakwala* then english after etc.). But now she knows how to read english and can easily read *Kwakwala* and is keen to do so. It is amazing to hear her sound out the words and make the sounds of our language while reading on her own. E. *Na'yi* on her own accord will say "*laxwala'nukwanthus*" (love I have for you) as we are ending our phone calls and I believe she is making these phone calls in the presence of her friends, and as she is a teenager, I will take this as a win! *La'man dulo* – I am winning! *La'man's dulo* – we are winning!

Ga'wala

(helping)

Our language learning helps me to engage with *x̱an sas̱m* on a deeper level



Figure 44: *Angwuxda* (who is that (close/nearby)?
Bak'wamk'ala kak'utla as a family at the Copper Maker gallery *lay Tsaxis*,
Katg'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Language engagement motivates me to connect with each of *x̱an sas̱m* in a way that might not occur if not for our *Bak'wamk'ala* journey. I am by nature not the most interactive parent and I am usually busy with household management and maintaining my *Kwak'wala* work. However, I have found myself inclined to reach out and engage in interactive activities with *x̱an sas̱m* if it will progress our language use.

'namadzakwala

(everyone talking at the same time)

Family learning is beautiful chaos!

The endearing video “*Ga:weh Hedwe’: O:neh?* Where are we going now?” showcasing a coffee run with a group of Elders in the Seneca language (Seneca Language, 2022) reminds me of the chaos that ensues when taking *xan sasqm* through the drive thru. A good opportunity for using our language but always utter chaos and loudness with three children calling out their orders at once. I must be swift in asking each one while reminding them to use their *Bakwamk’ala*. A test of stamina to use and teach language while going through the drive thru with multiple hungry children! One time the drive thru was unable to make out our order “your dog is too loud, I can’t hear you,” *k’iyos ‘wat’si, hadaxstalida sasqm* (no dog, noisy children).



Figure 45: *K'wisux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today)!
Galma'yudlami E. Na'yi, naqagawe ma'yudlami C. Mixala & Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas.
Kata'makwimuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, 2022

Ts'ak'ala

(to relate a story)

The good (*ik*), the bad (*yak*), and the silly (*ala'an*)...(story[ies]) of our journey

My and my household's *Bakwamkala* journey contains a wide variety of stories, including ones that warm my heart (*ikan noke'*), ones that make me cringe (*'yek'al'kala* – feel bad) and funny ones that bring forth a smile (*manxwala*). Language learning is not for the faint of heart (as I have been told). It is a voyage that will take your *noke'* (heart and mind) through a roller coaster ride of ups and downs and all arounds.

Iki da t'sak'ala (good is the story) – One night I read to C. *Mixala* from a new collection of

Bakwamkala kadukw gayutl Likwala li'laxwal (book[s] from *Likwala* loved ones) and she asked me about the upside-down y. I told her our *Likwala li'laxwal* use a different writing system and their upside-down y is a d barred l (ł) for us. They call our language *Likwala* and we call it *Kwakwala*. C. *Mixala* asked, “but is it all *Bakwamkala*?” and I responded, “E (yes)!”, and her response was “so, it’s all equal.” *Ikan noke'* (happy heart/mind) for her openness to both dialects and writing systems.

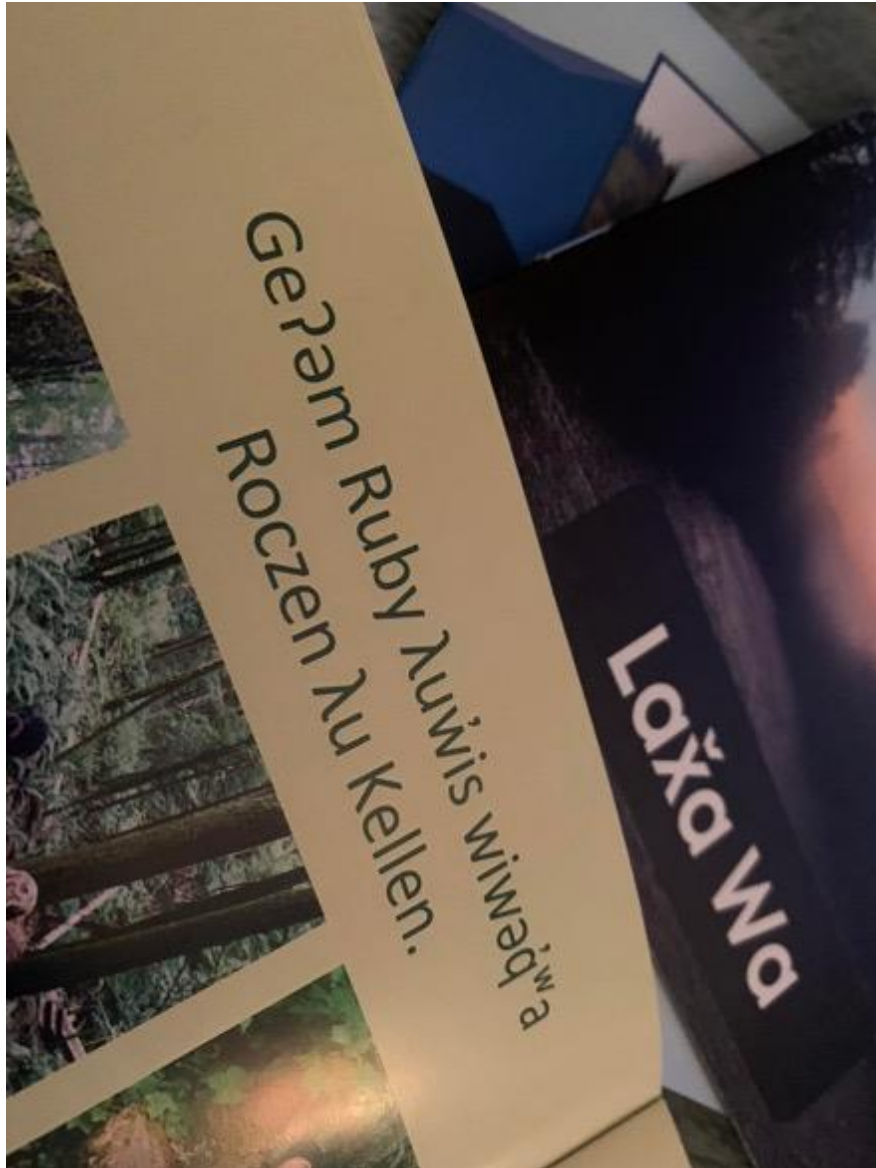


Figure 46: *Nusa* (tell a story, legend or myth).

“But it’s all *Bakwamkala*” & “It’s all equal” C. *Mixala* (age 6) response to our discussion on dialect and writing system differences with *Kwakwala* and *Likwala*. *Kikata'makw'inukw* - *Yola*, 2023

Yaki da t'sak'ala (bad is the story) – During one of our trips home to *Ukwānalis* for our *Bakwamkala* work C. *Mixala* and I were walking down to the road and I pointed to a sign and said it in our *Baklmkala* “*duxw'i!, uya...Amlux da galananam* (look, slow... playing are the children/slow children are playing).” C. *Mixala* looked at me concerningly, “that’s not very niI.”



Figure 47: *Uya... Amlux da Igangananəm* (slow... Iying are the children/slow... children are playing). After telling C. *Mixala* what this sign said in our *Bakwamkala* she expressed her concern for the wording, expressing, “that’s not very nice!” *lax Ukwanalis. Kata'makwinuxw - Yola, 2023.*

Ala'ani da t'sakalala (silly is the story) – One winter I tried to do a quick buckle of just the top part of *Sgn'yas'* toddler seat as he had his bulky snowsuit on, and we were not going far. As I was getting into the driver's seat after buckling him, I could hear him madly calling out to me but wasn't sure what he was saying. He repeated himself shouting, “my *mina*, you forgot to buckle my *mina*!” (*mina* – penis).



Figure 48: *T'laliwe'* (to forget). “You forgot to buckle my *mina* (penis)!” *San'yas* (age 4).
San'yas & C. *Mixq̄la laxa Nage*. *Kat̄makwinuxw* - *Yola*, 2022.

Sanala
(to be whole)

Restorative experiences of *Bak'wamk'ala* reclamation

Language learning and reclamation is healing, there is no doubt in my *noke'* about that. But how does it heal? what is healing? getting better? I like the idea of restoration. It does seem that parts of myself have been and are continuing to be restored and it seems the greatest form of healing for myself. Robert Joseph, fondly known as Bobby Joe, a *Kwakwaka'wakw* Elder known for his work in reconciliation says, “when our languages are restored, we are restored, we will be mentally, physically, spiritually restored when we can speak this language again” (Joseph, et al., 2021, 1:22:20).

Nugwa'am
(I am)

The words of an *Ojibwe* man resonate with me when he says of language learning “to start having understandings of who you are and who we're meant to be” (Whitehead, 2020, 26:20), as learning *Kwak'wala* has brought this forward for me. I feel incredibly grounded in who I am as a *Bak'wam* (an Indigenous and/or human being) but also have begun to experience a spiritual sense of connection to the universe and a growing confidence in my path forward in relation to my language reclamation.

Gaxittala

(coming into a house)

Kwakwala and ceremonial reclamation within our household



Figure 49: *Labalisatlan laxwala'nukwqntus* (I will love you forever).
Nugwa'am qbamp Yola dressing *E. Na'yi* during her *Gaxalilitso* ceremonial week *lax Dlaksiwe'*,
Kata'makinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Our household *Kwakwala* journey has enabled us to reclaim use of our ancestral language as part
of ceremonial practices.

Lalax'sola

(passage through life)

E. Na'yi (& *ḍlu'li'gas* Scarlett) and *Gaxalitṣo* (coming-of-age)

When E. Na'yi began her first moon cycle we were living in *Snuneymuxw* and it was during the covid pandemic. We packed up and travelled to *Ḍłaksiwe'* (*Kwaguṭ gwi'nagwis* near Port McNeill) and stayed in cabins for the week. Each morning E. Na'yi, *ḍlu'li'gas* Scarlett, myself and at least one *Anis* joined us for a morning cleanse, and I was able to include some of our language as part of this. At the end of the weeklong process, we had a small private ceremony where we removed the plain blanket, fabric ties and hat used throughout the week and dressed E. Na'yi in goats' wool ties, *tsep*, *k̄angextola*, jewellery and same hat. I was able to spend time with one of our *Noxsola* - *Gwigilakw* (Margaret Wilson) who lived in *Ḍłaksiwe'* at the time, and she helped me put together the language needed for this undressing/dressing and offerings to the fire. I referred to my notes which enabled me to conduct the ceremony in our language on the ancestral lands of our *Kwakw̄ala Bakw̄amk'ala*. Later a similar ceremony was held for x̄an *ḍlu'li'gas* Scarlett in a public *gukwdzi* gathering and again I was able to use my notes to guide the work. Our coming-of-age ceremonies amongst the *Kwakw̄ak̄a'wakw* have undergone a process of revitalization and it was an empowering experience to bring our language into the week process and the final dressing ceremony.



Figure 50: *xaxaganukwt'sane'* (wrist bone), *t'lakwani* (elbow), *xaxaganukwsidze'* (ankle bone), *up'ige* (knee). Fabric pieces are fastened around the wrists, elbows, ankles & knees of *Dlu'li'gas* Scarlett during her and E. *Na'yi's* *Gaxalilitso* ceremonial week *lax Dłaxsiwe'tłama'is*, *Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Some *Bak'wamkala/Kwak'wala* relevant to final ceremony:

dłaxwidas laxa tiwe'

(stand on the cedar mat)

lawida xus...

(tl off your)

ax'atłaluda's xwa...

(put on the)

łak'was

(fire, outside on the ground)



Figure 51: *A'ekakila* (take care).
Nugwa'am Yola & galma'yudłami E. Na'yi during *Gaxalilitso* ceremonial week *łax Dłaksiwe' tłama'is*,
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Hi'yalagalit

(people moving about in a house)

C. *Mix̱ala* and house brushing



Figure 52: *Laxwalap̱a* (love each another)!
C. *Mix̱ala* and *San'yas* embracing *lax̱ Tayagutḻ gwi'nagwis*,
Katq'makwinux̱w - Thi'li'nux̱w, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

We recently had our home *lax̱ Gwa'dzi'* ceremonially brushed by a team from our nation as we were experiencing challenges with our house. C. *Mix̱ala* was keen to take part in the brushing, and I stayed to support her and the team while the rest of our household went out. The team welcomed us to take part in the brushing and throughout the process I shared with C. *Mix̱ala* the *Kwakwala* coming to me as we accompanied the team. This was a profound experience. It was intense having our home ceremonially cleansed in this way. C. *Mix̱ala* is an

intuitive being and often picks up on energy that others may not. I was grateful the team was open to C. *Mixq̄la* taking part in this cleansing process. It was a meaningful experience to be able to share out our language with her on the spot. It is my understanding our people used to support the development of these intuitive gifts from a young age, and I was grateful for the opportunity for C. *Mixq̄la* to participate as a way of supporting this gift of hers along with our language.

Some *Bakwamk̄ala/Kwakwala* relevant to house brushing:

higo bo

(go away)

lolinuxw

(ghost)

ikamtli

(it will be okay)

xikwa

(sweep)



Figure 53: *K'wakwax'u'mas* (plants), *Pata'yi* (medicines).
Plant medicines are used to *xikwa* (sweep) and clear energy during house brushings.
Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Sən'yas dlu'wis hamsamala

(*Sən'yas* and his supernatural bird masked dancing)



Figure 54: *Kalkaxstala* (wearing a diaper).
Sən'yas with C. *Mixala* behind him *lax Dłaksiwe'* during *Gaxalilitso* ceremonial week *lax Dłaksiwe'*,
Katq'makinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

When isolating during the covid pandemic *Sən'yas*, who was still in diapers, took an interest in our *hamsamala* masked dance. During this time, he watched and mimicked daily the *hamsamala* from a youtube video. Once we were back to some normalcy his practice continued regularly. As this was an everyday part of his livelihood, I compiled the language to accompany his movements. This was profound for me as I have come to realize many of our ceremonial dances are taught through english. To have the *Kwakwala* needed to accompany this masked

dance and support my youngest with this is an act of reclamation. He has recently returned to his regular practice of dancing following youtube with his *hamsamala* mask.

Some *Bakwamkala/Kwakwala* relevant to the *hamsamala*:

iki'stala

(go up)

bg'ni'stala

(go down)

dlaxw'ida's

(stand up, command),

kwax'idas

(sit down, command)



Figure 55: *Bq'ni'sta* (moving down).
Alxšte' ma'yudłami Sqn'yas dlu'wis hamsqml lax Tayagut atli,
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

For me these examples are profound acts of reclamation and instances that have occurred within our household, except for the public *gukwdzi* ceremony for *xan dlu'li'gas* Scarlett's final dressing ceremony. And so, they would not be widely known amongst our larger family, community or nation. I believe these examples demonstrate what is possible with language reclamation and has been a restorative experience for me and my immediate and some extended family. Our *Bakwamkala* is a "medium for conducting most of our ceremonies" (Whitehead, 2020, 0:57). It is realigning to use the language within which the ceremonies were originally created, to guide the ceremony back to itself.

Nakal'kala
(peace within)

Language reclamation as a coping mechanism for grief, loss and intergenerational trauma

I lost my brother to an overdose October 30, 2023, and experienced the deepest pain and sorrow that I have known in my lifetime so far. I came to realize how my language work keeps me grounded and going in day-to-day life. My brother struggled for numerous years with addiction and tried to shift things for himself and his young daughter with various treatment and recovery programs. Years ago, he said to me, “we all have our addictions, you going to school is like an addiction.” At the time I felt annoyed and didn’t agree but now in hindsight I can see his point. I grew up in the same household as my brother, connected to the same family, same communities, same history. I carry the burdens of intergenerational trauma in my *noke'* and *uk'wine'*. I have throughout my adult years kept myself busy and productive as a way of regulating. I have moved through my schooling up till this PhD and saw this as a way to create space to continue learning my language. This journey of learning and reclaiming our *Bak'wamkala* has provided a great deal of regulation for me and purposefulness. *Malidi*, Sydney Roberts shares that *Kwakwala* for her is an “obsession” (Joseph, et al., 2021). I understand this as my addiction but one that keeps me earthside to carry on with and for my children.



Figure 56: *'walas laxwəlapux da gangnanəm̄x* (the children really love each other).
Sən'yas & C. Miḡala embracing *lax Tayagul ɔwi'nagwis*,
Katə'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

K'wala'yu – this endearing *Kwakwala* concept is highlighted in a Ted talk by Joye Walkus (2015) who engages her audience in a beautiful story about this term. It is also the title of a music video created by *Kwakwaka'wakw* youth in the *Gwa'dzi'*. Another youth, Mariah Walkus, also speaks to this important concept in her video about our ancestral language (2014).

Hasdaqala'yu – both terms are found in a lullaby composed by *Mayanit*, Diana Matilpi (2018) and I have included both in a love song for my children, taking inspiration from the *Mi'kmaw* version of the Beatles song, Blackbird (Stevens, 2019).

When my brother passed, I came to understand these terms in a deeper way. These terms are ways we can refer to our children. My grief was overwhelming and had it not been for *xan sasqm* I am not sure what would have become of me. I had to remind myself to breathe and to consciously focus on my breath to regulate my system. I had to get up and move to help feed, clothe and care for my children daily. *Xan sasqm* were my *K'wala'yu* (reasons for living) and *Hasdaqala'yu* (reasons for breathing) during this heavy time.



Figure 57: *Pqłamx'idas* (close your eyes).
Nugwa'am Yola lax Tayagut awi'nagwis,
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Hase'

(love gift/breath of life)

Ukwine'/noke'/bakwine'

(body/mind/spirit)

Breath as it connects to body/mind/spirit

Breath is such an important aspect of our being and something I am curious to know more about as it seems our people had dynamic views of breath related to our existence in life and death. The small bits of language I have learned related to breath indicate this, but I know there is much more to learn. Marion Hunt-Doig shares teachings related to the *yaya_xws_qm* she has made for her children - “*Hase' gax_qn* – like “ha” a breath that I will leave with them” (2013, 9:58) which inspired me to create ceremonial pieces for *x_qn sas_qm* for this dissertation.

I had a deeply moving experience attending online *Haitzaqvala* yoga (movement and breathing) sessions shortly after the passing of *x_qn Wak_w'wa*. I picked up on some of the words as *Haitzaqvala* is a language related to *Kwak_wala* but found hearing the language to be highly activating. The resting portion, in corpse pose, while hearing *Haitzaqvala* brought forward tears and grief for my brother and introspection on the interconnectedness of life and death. It also led me to remember our *Haitzaqv Ump'_wale'* and *Gagas'_wale'* who have also passed on. *Haitzaqv* was the first ancestral language I was exposed to while living in *Wag_lis_la* as a child and where I was connected to my *Wak_w'wa'_wale'*, *Ump'_wale'* & *Gagas'_wale'*. Despite my grief I also felt a tremendous amount of ease and a knowing that life and spirit are interconnected like a continuum. I seemingly became one with *x_qn Wak_w'wa'_wale'* while in this resting pose and understood that he is always with me.

Ḳamtila

(to make, write a new song)

Singing and song creation as part of language reclamation and wellness

I have found my song voice as part of our *Bak'wamk'ala* journey and sing within our household almost daily. It is a beautiful experience to sing in our ancestral language for *x̣an saṣm*. Throughout *x̣an saṣm* younger years and up till now I have created simple songs to accompany daily routines, such as teeth and hair brushing; hair and body washing; and even lice combing! I have also created morning and bedtime songs including a *Kwak'wala* version of “Twinkle, twinkle little star”, journeying songs for walking adventures and a *Kwak'wala* version of the Beatles’ song, Blackbird, a love song for *x̣an saṣm*.



Figure 58: *Danxalatlan's* (we are all going to sing).
Dlu'ligas Scarlett, *xan galma'yudlqmi Na'yi* and myself *lax Dlaksiwe tlgama'is*,
K'ikatq'makw'inuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Łaxwala k'amdam ka'an sasam *

(love song for my children)

- sung to adapted version of the Beatles' Blackbird tune.

Ikān noke' ka's

Łaxwala'nukwantus

Kwala'yu

Łaxwala'nukwantus kwala'yu

Olika

Łaxwala

Olakala ika taxwala

Ikan noke' ka's

Takwala gan noke' ka's

Hasdaxala'yu

Takwala gan noke'x ka's Hasdaxala'yu

Olika

Takwala

Olakala ika takwala

Happy is my heart & mind by you

Love I have for you

My reason for living

Love I have for you, my reason for living

Great

Loved one

Really great, loved one

My heart & mind is happy by you

Beating is my heart for you

My reason for breathing

Beating is my heart for you, my reason for breathing

Great

Beating heart

Really great, beating heart

Gayutt - Abampa Yola



Figure 59: *Laxwala'nukwantlasn 'naxwa sasama* (I love all my children).
C. *Mixala* (left) & E. *Na'yi* (right) embracing *Sgn'yas* (middle), *Kikata'makw'inukw* - K Photography, 2018

Lalxsan dala'ogwa, Keisha Everson's Master's project is entitled: *Danxalagalitan's* 'We Will Sing in the House': Reclaiming Domains of the Home Through Song in *Kwakwala*' (2021) and her project "outlines the process of researching about and composing four songs in the *Kwakwaka'wakw* song format for the purposes of *Kwakwala* language revitalization." Two of these songs are now available on youtube for us as *Kwakwaka'wakw* to learn and use. I have referred to these resources as part of my learning and teaching of *Kwakwala*. These two songs

are “*Ixpami da Kutala* - the fish tastes good” a song about fish processing (*Kumugwe'* Cultural Society, 2021a) and “*Kamdqm ka'ox Kia* - song for Kia” (*Kumugwe'* Cultural Society, 2021b) an uplifting song created for her sister. Both songs have catchy tunes and are great for learning language and are a generous offering from *Lalxsn dala'ogwa*.

In *Kwakwaka'wakw* cultural practices currently, it is mainly the men who sing during *gukwdzi* ceremonies and other community gatherings. It is my understanding this was not always the case and many if not most of our ceremonial dances were initiated by a women’s chant. I believe we all sang in our language as part of family and community gatherings while picking berries, gathering medicines including cedar for weaving, jarring fish, canoeing etc.

Hamsa

(berry picking)

Pa'a'yi

(medicine)

Kutala

(fish)

Xwakwana

(canoe)



Figure 60: *Danxalan* (singing I am).
Nugwa'am Yola singing and drumming *lax Dłaksiwe' ilama'is*,
Kikata'makw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

SXEDFELISIYE (Hummingbird) Renee J. Sampson, W̱SÁNEĆ community member and language revitalizer, speaks to the healing powers of a song, “that didn’t come from me, it came from place” (Jaskwaan & SXEDFELISIYE, 2022, 30:40), explaining it came out to her while out on the lands with children she was teaching. I had a similar experience with my family where our language and song came flowing from within me but in connection to the land we were exploring - *Kwaguʔ qwi'nagwis*, the ancestral lands of our *Kwakwala*.

Malidi, Sydney Roberts, a *Kwakwala* enthusiast, says the “frequency and sounds of language is healing...powerful and supernatural “*Nawalakw*”” (Joseph, et al., 2021, 40:55). This resonates with me. As a child *xan Ump'wale* would sing *Haitzaqv* songs while lying on the kitchen floor using the floor as his drum. His voice and the beat would reverberate throughout the house. In hindsight I recognize that he was regulated in these moments, and it helped our household to be regulated. When I am feeling off, I find singing in our *Bakwamkala* helps to shift my energy and influences our household and *sasqmanu'xw* especially. It was evident from the interviews with my *sasqmanu'xw Bakwamkala kika'kutla'mas* that singing in our language is a joyous part of their livelihood too.

Recently *xan dlu'li* (my nephew) Cody sent me two recordings of *xan Ump'wale'* singing, along with the accompanying song sheets. It has been good for my *noke'* to hear *xan's Ump'wale'* singing again and appreciate that *xan sasqm* can also hear him sing. Only once have I pulled out my drum, that came from *xan's Ump'wale'*'s collection and sang along with him but what a profound experience this was for me. In my childhood I had opportunity to sing and dance to *Haitzaqv* songs led by *xan's Ump'wale'* and these memories uphold me in a good way. I never had the chance to sing alongside *xan's Ump'wale'* as he passed 20 years ago. I look forward to learning these two songs and singing alongside *xan Ump'wale'* for my *dlu'wan sasqm's* benefit.

Singing in our language is incredibly regulating for me and for *x̱an sas̱amanu'x̱w*. It is also a reclamation of song for women and children and this domain of learning. Lately, *x̱an sas̱amanu'x̱w* and I sing together, while I drum, the *Kwagu'l* prayer to the rising sun in the mornings while waiting for their bus on the sidewalk. We look towards the mountain range and ocean while singing and drumming. It is a way we connect to our *q̱wi'nagwis* and incorporate prayer into our daily life. This practice co-regulates our systems and *x̱an Isas̱amanu'x̱w* begin their school day in good spirits as do I.

H̱awa'x̱'ala

(prayer)

Creative expression of self and gratitude (prayers) through language

Learning to express gratitude (pray) in my ancestral language has also been a profound component in my reclamation journey. It is now a daily practice to ground myself in appreciating all the good things in my life as connected to a higher power. It helps me to live my life from a strengths-based approach and supports me through the most challenging days. It seems others feel the same as expressed by *M̱alidi*, Sydney Roberts and *Ikawegilakw*, Deanna Nicolson in a webinar on the language of wellness (Joseph, et al., 2021).

Below is an expression of gratitude (prayer) I have been practicing with our *Baḵw̱m̱kala* programs recently with words from *Helagalis* (Spruce Wamiss), a wise and gentle teacher of our language who has now passed on.

Gilakas'la Bāk'wīlā'inuḵw Gilakas'la *

(thank you creator thank you)

Gilakas'la k̄ā'eda 'nala t'soweyus gax̄an

Gilakas'la k̄ano'ḵw d̄l̄id̄ādl̄ola d̄tu'w̄ano'ḵw gukw̄alasi

Gilakas'la k̄ano'ḵw h̄ā'me d̄tu'wida 'wapi

Gilakas'la k̄an'oḵw āwi'nagwis d̄tu' he'stalis

Gilakas'la Bāk'wīlā'inuḵw Gilakas'la

Thank you, Creator, Thank you

Thank you for this life you have given me

Thank you for our family and our homes

Thank you for our food and water

Thank you for our lands/waters and universe

Thank you, Creator, Thank you

Gayut̄ - Helagalis'w̄āle' (Spruce Wamiss)



Figure 61: *Su'man t̄is̄alas* (you are my sunshine).
Nugwa'am Yola holding *alumas Wa'yugwamala C. Mix̄ala lax̄ D̄łaksiwe' t̄lama'is,*
Kat̄g'makwinux̄w - Thi'li'nux̄w, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

An *Anishinaabemowin* hip-hop artist, Tall Paul (Paul Wenell Jr.), raps about his struggles to learn his ancestral language and includes a chorus speaking to the great spirit (Wenell, 2020). I admire how this artist has incorporated prayer into a modern hip-hop rap song and appreciate the creativity and intention. I believe it is important we be innovative in bringing prayer into our current lives and reclaim our *Bakwam* ways of praying in our languages not connected to religious practices which seems to have tainted many of our Kwakwala learners experience of *hawa'x'ala*.

Gichi-manido wiidookawishin ji-mashkawiziyaan (Great Spirit help me to be strong)

Mii dash bami'idiziyaan (So that I can help myself)

Miizhishinaam zaagi'iwewin (Show us all love)

Ganoozh ishinaam, bizindaw ishinaam (talk to us, hear us)

Mii-wenji nagamoyaan (That is why I am singing)

Nimishomis wiidookawishinaam ji-aabajitooyaang anishinaabe izhitwaawin (Grandfather help
us to use the Native ways)

mii-ji-bi-gikendamaan keyaa anishinaabe bimaadiziwin (so that we'll know how to live the
Native way/the good life)



Figure 62: *Su'man laxwala'yu* (you are my reason for love).
Xan galma'yudtami E. Na'yi lax Tayagut tlgma'is,
Katg'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

I'kikala

(feeling good, happy)

***Haitzaqvla* and joyous experiences of language learning through song and dance**

The first ancestral language I was exposed to as a child was *Haitzaqvla*, a related language of *Kwakwala*. I remember spending what felt like hours singing and dancing joyfully during cultural gatherings led by *xan's Ump'wale'*. I can still remember what the experience felt like in my *noke''* and *uk'wine'* and know this was rejuvenating for my *bak'wine'*. This was my first solid experience with ancestral language learning. *Haitzaqvla* was taught in the school as well but as an exposure program and so it is the singing and dancing as part of cultural gatherings that stands out to me. I also maintain an affinity for the *Haitzaqv* language, and the sounds and pitches are very familiar and activate something in me that I do not experience with *Kwakwala*.

This early life experience speaks to several important parts in ancestral language reclamation.

- 1) It is important to have positive experiences with language learning
- 2) Learning language through song and/or dance is incredibly beneficial
- 3) It is important to hear our language from as young an age as possible to be stored as core memories.



Figure 63: *Xalpida's* (turn around)!
Nugwa'qm Yola dlu'wan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi wearing our *yayaḡwsqm* (chilkat) *laḡ Tayagut tḡama'is,*
Katḡ'makwinuḡw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

K'ap'igali'l

(gathering together in a house/building)

Dugwitlala

(looking inside a house)

Ama'ya'nakwala

(becoming smaller)

Summary of *Yudqwx* (3) - household *Bakwamkala* reclamation

In this section I share more in depth of our household reclamation history in two components: *Kakutlapa* (let's learn together) and *Sgnala* (to be whole). I tell about learning collaboratively *dlu'wan sasam* (with my children) and of profound restorative experiences directly connected *ka'an sasam* (to my children) as well as others that are indirectly related but now a part of our household norms. Both *Kakutlapa* and *Sgnala* come together as our household family stories of reclaiming who we are as *Bakwam* through the learning of our *Bakwamkala*. This is aligned with the design shown on our *Tsep* which typically exemplifies family history.

Kakutlapa (learning together) - I share of collaboratively learning *dlu'wan sasam* who provide an in-house community of speakers enabling me to progress my proficiency, highlight the challenges of one parent being the sole carrier of language learning and teaching within the household, the vastness of meeting the needs of three different children with not only ancestral language but individual socio-emotional and dietary needs as well, discuss how each of *xan sasam*'s understanding and use of our language is directly related to where I was at in my own learning when each of them were born, I speak to my fascination in witnessing the variety of outputs in relation to inputs of each *sasam* and an awareness that I may not see the full extent

until later, I tell of the greater levels of engagement *dhu'wan sasam* that are motivated by language reclamation, touch on the chaos of family learning and share some of our stories.

Sanala (restorative) - in this segment I share about specific examples directly related to each of *xan sasam* followed by other experiences that have shaped me and are now a part of our daily household practices.

E. *Na'yi* (& *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett) - *Gaxalilitso* (coming-of-age) ceremonial week – during this time

I incorporated as much of our language into the daily activities and with the support of one of our *Noxsola* was able to facilitate the final dressing ceremony in *xan's Bak'wamkala*.

C. *Mixala* & house brushing – C. *Mixala* requested to take part in a brushing of our house, I supported her in this, and we accompanied the team in clearing the energy from our home using plant medicines. I added *xan's Bak'wamkala* as we moved through this process speaking directly to C. *Mixala*.

San'yas & *hamsamala* – I reached out on facebook for support and gathered terms to use while *San'yas* danced the *hamsamala* (supernatural bird masked dance) regularly in our living room.

These three above examples related to each of *xan sasam* are profound experiences of restoration within our household. Many of our ceremonies are currently conducted in *mamalakala* (english) amongst our *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation and for us to not only bring these ceremonies to life within our home but also with *xan's Bak'wamkala* is a huge deal.

In losing *xan Wak'wa* (my brother) to an overdose in October of 2023 I became highly aware of how my reclamation journey is a coping mechanism for intergenerational trauma. It was a devastating and painful experience to lose *xan Wak'wa* to addiction and brought up for me

the history of colonial harms within our family. I found great comfort in the use of *x̱an's Bak'wamḵala*, speaking to him, praying for him and in taking care of his apartment in the city following his burial in our *Dzawada'enux̱w* homelands. I also came to understand the terms of *ḵwala'yu* and *hasdaq̱ala'yu* during this extensive period of grief. It felt like I was somewhere in the ether and not grounded earthside, and it was *x̱an sas̱am* who kept me going, my *ḵwala'yu* (reasons for living) and *hasdaq̱ala'yu* (my reasons for breathing). I experienced a deeply spiritual occurrence participating in a *Haitzaq̱ala* yoga session not long after *x̱an Wak'wa's* passing. While in corpse pose, I envisioned my late brother resting in his burial box sensing a transcendence of life to spirit like a continuum and felt at peace while also crying for *x̱an Wak'wa'wate'*. I have only learned bits about our people's views of breath and breathing as part of my language learning, but it seems they had dynamic perspectives of breath as connected to body, mind and spirit and I am yearning to learn more.

An unexpected yet profound outcome of my language learning journey is finding my song voice. I have created numerous songs to accompany daily household activities and one song I feel especially proud of is a *Bak'wamḵala* version of the Beatles' Blackbird song taking inspiration from the *Mi'kmaw*. This is a *laxwala ḵamḏam* or *saḻam* (love song) for *x̱an sas̱am* and fills my *noke'* with *laxwala* when I sing it to them. I refer to the work of *Lalx̱an Dala'ogwa* (Keisha Everson) - *Danx̱alagaliṯan's 'We Will Sing in the House': Reclaiming Domains of the Home Through Song in Kwak'wala'* (2021) who researched Kwakwaka'wakw song composition and composed a collection of songs for our nation's use as part of her Master's project. I have come to know that we as women and family groups sang regularly and have been encouraging this aspect of reclamation within my household and with the programs I facilitate. I have had the experience of song coming to me while exploring our lands and the understanding that to

become a true speaker of our language I must also become a speaker. As a child I remember *xan Ump'wale* singing and drumming within our home and the sound of his voice and drum would reverberate through the house. Looking back, I realize he was regulated in these moments and so was I. I now sing regularly as a co-regulating practice for me, *xan sasam* and our household, with the understanding that our home has its own energy and we have *ma'l bu'basi* (two cats). Lately, *xan sasamanu'xw* and I have been singing and drumming the *Kwagu'l* prayer to the rising sun while waiting for their morning bus to school. It feels good to be '*naman's noke'* (one heart, one mind) as they depart and we begin our school and workdays with a regulated *noke'* (heart & mind). Reclaiming prayer through expressing gratitude has been a gamechanger. Grounding myself daily in gratefulness for all that is good in connection to a greater power with the ability to do so in our ancestral language is incredibly healing. As a child I often participated in the *Haitzaqv* children's dance series led by *xan Ump'wale*. This brought such joy to my *noke'* and set-the-stage for my continued participation in the songs, dances and language of our people. I am now doing what I can to ensure *xan sasam* have positive and joyous experiences of taking part in these practices especially in learning *xan's Bak'wamkala*.

All the components described in this section are elements of our reclamation journey that are occurring within our household and *dlu'wan sasam*. The next section speaks to a wide variety of areas that occur outside of our household, not directly involving *xan sasam* and are a part of the greater scope of ILR.

Tsepila, Mu #4 – Adorn tsep with personalized Bakwam Ing, colorful details and sound makers...

Amusa (decorate)

Amudzam (decorations)

Tfa'yala (beads)

Gabam (button[s])

I relate this aspect of *tsepila* to **interesting and unique topics in Indigenous language revitalization** that seem *ugwakala* (different) from most ILR topics including our **Ancestral Language Reclamation for Wellness video**.



Figure 64: *Tsqskwana* (songbird).

Nearly complete replica of *xan Gagas'wqle' tsep* featuring two coppers and three birds, *Katamaxw'inuxw* - *Yola*, 2024

This section has to do with the buttons, beads and bells etc. used to decorate the *Tsep* and have included the terms: *Amusa* (decorate), *Amudzqm* (decorations), *Tla'yala* (beads), & *Gqbm* (button(s)). These adornments can be personalized to the interest of the person creating the *Tsep* and there is variety in the types of buttons, beads, bells etc. These unique details and differences I relate to the term *Ugwakala* (different). In this segment I gather and describe aspects of my reclamation journey that are more interesting and unique and seem (to me) less common experiences in ILR. They are multi-faceted aspects of the greater scope of ILR and not necessarily taking place within my household or directly *dhu'wan sasqm*. Like the protruding nature of the decorative beads, buttons and bells adorning the tsep, the topics described in this section extend beyond our household into the larger realm of our nations'

Kwak'wala/Bak'wamkala revitalization. These areas are the need for:

storytelling/storying/storywork; land inspired rather than land-based learning; urban learning compared to in-community; the influence of online programming; pros/cons of online learning; yearning for more enriched experiences connecting to land & outdoor activities; family-friendly programming; nothing for the children/youth without them; *dhugwe'* - our language as a treasure; worldview; encouragement for the future; trauma informed practice/lateral kindness; "why bother" *dlixs'ala* with E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett; Creativity in resource production; Language and Movement including *Kwak'wala Ka'yaka* (soccer); and participation in a *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.

K'ayola

(telling stories, taking turns telling stories)

The need for storytelling/storying/storywork reclamation as part of language learning

An Oregon family who are the last speakers of their *Kalapuya* language refer to storytelling as a lost art (Brown, 2021). A young *Kwakwaka'wakw* language learner *Gusdidzas* (Matt Ambers) tells of finding his way as a storyteller and mentions the recent decline in storytelling amongst our nation (*Xpey Wellness*, 2021b). In this same webinar *Ikawegilaḵw* (Deanna Nicolson), a *Kwakwala* champion, reminds us that our songs and dances are not just performances but re-enactments of our stories.

Kwankwankwali'gadziwakes Robert Joseph known for his eloquence in speech shares a story to conclude this same discussion:

In the particular school I went to, on the playground, there were 7 distinct languages and in 11 years I was there were no more Indigenous languages and the only language I heard was english. So when I left that school and got married and moved to the city I discovered that I was ashamed to talk this language that I had been born into and I didn't talk it for a very, very, very long time and then as I kept moving on in the progression of my life I realized that the language was hardly being spoken by anybody and that it might disappear and I recognized I was a part of a small core of people of what they consider fluent speakers who could still speak the language and then I became worried and knew that language was important but did not know the full extent yet and then I began to think...oh my god, there will be one day that I will have to go and stand by the ocean and

babble to the ocean...as there will be no one left to talk to hear this really noble, ancient, honorable language that brought us all up in our lives. (*Xpey* Wellness, 2021b)



Figure 65: *Damsxi* (ocean, salt water, salt) *lax Dłaksiwe'*
Kikatq'makw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

A similar story is shared by the last fluent speaker of *Tolowe*, “to be the last fluent speaker was never a goal of mine, there was a mess of us all learning language, a bunch of us that were really getting under this learning culture and dance and at some point, I looked back and realized I was alone” (Bommelyn, 2019,1:52)

Another story by a *Kwakwala* Elder teacher: “culture is very important. I never lost my language. When they tried to do that to me in residential school, cuz my mom couldn’t speak

english, I had to keep it. That's why I am teaching right now. I will be teaching until I'm 80 or 90

[laughs].” (Dawson Cranmer, 2019)

*Gwigilase'sa gayulwa'le' Olakalawila. Kisq̄n wel xasa'mas xq̄n Kwakwala'inuqxw, kq̄n
abampwq̄'le kis wel mamalakala. Heme'kq̄n lagil kakutla'mas xq̄n Kwakwala'inuqxw laxux da
'nalax. Hedq̄n i'axala UBC. Kakutlatq̄n laksul xa 80 dlawi 90!*

Tsitsakalames Ruby – Ruby's stories provide a diverse collection of short stories based on her experience of growing up *lax Ukwq̄nalis*. Ruby is my mother's close relative, and I know her personally as my *Anis*. I appreciate the spectrum of her tales: *Dzunukwa* (wild woman of the woods), to childhood stories in the village, to a heart wrenching story of going to residential school, to growing up and moving to the city, to an instructional story of how to make a *kangextola*. *Anis* Ruby is a great storyteller and is so expressional. These stories are great examples for us as learners to follow in crafting our storying ability.



Figure 66: *Kak̓ad̓axwsilat̓as* (you are going to read).
Nugwa'am Yola reading one of our *Kwak̓wala* books to our family at the Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis*,
K̓ikata'makw'inuk̓w - Tli'li'nuk̓w, Kimberely Kufaas, 2020

Our online *Bak̓wam̓kala Kwak̓wala* Diploma in Indigenous Language Revitalization program is currently making use of these stories as well as the early learner books mentioned previously. The early learner books provide a good base for progressing our immersive ability and *Anis Ruby's* stories encourage our story-telling practice. Storying/storytelling/storywork seems an important aspect of language reclamation and a component that also could be lost if not tended to. It is good to hear *Gusdidzas* has taken to storytelling and good that we are making use of stories within our *Bak̓wam̓kala Kwak̓wala* program currently. I appreciate the learning and use of *Anis Ruby's* stories as they connect to our home village of *Ukw̓analis* and surrounding communities giving us a sense of how our people lived, connected with each other and our land masses, and how they traversed our ancestral lands.

Huttilala qwi'nagwis k'akutla'a gaxan's
(listen to the land, along the waters, teaching us)

Land-inspired (rather than land-based) learning



Figure 67: *Mu'lan tlasa qwi'naqola* (grateful I am for the lands, islands & waters).
Nugwa'am Yola holding up a piece of a *K'u'mis* (crab) to *E. Na'yi* as part of our *Bakwqmkala* learning,
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

At the beginning of my intensive period of language learning and doctoral study, I wondered how to learn *Kwakwala* as part of land-based learning when I did not live in our homelands. I felt concerned my language learning would not be the same if it was not connected to the ancestral lands it derived from. I shared this worry and wonder of how to learn while living in the city with my ILR PhD colleagues. It sparked an interesting dialogue and included the following responses “If you remain in Nanaimo your grandchildren and descendants will then be from there...” and “you can always go to a park...” I came to realize there are varied experiences of land connection and ancestral language reclamation. I had a fixed idea about

what land-based learning is, and I found that it was useful to think about my practice as land-*inspired* learning, which allowed me to start my process where I was, even while I was living away from my ancestral home.

In our village of *Ukwānālis* our people have lived within those lands and the waters since time immemorial. Our origin stories connect us to that location along the *Gwa'yi* river and watershed, and our community take great strides to remain there always.

An *Anishinaabe* linguist, Lindsay Morcom (2019), states:

Indigenous languages that possess so much knowledge of culture, of history, of ways to relate to one another, of ways to relate to our environment having been on this land since time immemorial these languages have developed here and they contain priceless environmental knowledge that helps us relate well to the land on which we live.



Figure 68: *Dłaksiwe' wa* (river). *Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

I have come to know living alongside a river is a unique experience and can relate to the sharing from a *Karuk* language revivalist when he says, “you won’t know it until you come here and actually experience it for yourself and that is how the language is, if you’re not actually experiencing it, speaking it and feeling it around you, you won’t actually know it” (Albers, et al., 2019, 4:20) “you might know it (in mind) but not actually know it (in heart)” ...”you won’t really understand the language and the place that it comes from.”

The *Karuk* were severed from their river and are now reconnecting to both the river and language. *Karuk*: Language of the river ... “understanding that language, understanding that ecosystem, understanding that culture, and how they can be woven together, that is the only true recipe for success in revitalization of all three” (Albers, et al., 2019, 3:20). Hearing this history

of the *Karuk* activated my *noke'* (heart/mind) as to my community of *Uk'wanalis'* experience of living along the river and how our remote location makes for unique circumstances particularly in relation to the revitalization of our *Bak'wamk'ala*. In our recent *Dzawada'enuxw* language revitalization planning I came to realize the importance of capturing our *Bak'wamk'ala* for living along and travelling in and out on the river and inlet, as well as the connected watershed. We are the only community within the *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation who lives in this way and if we as *Dzawada'enuxw* miss this opportunity it will be a whole facet of lost vocabulary that will impact our livelihood moving forward.



Figure 69: *'matsali gada* (what is this)?

Scarlett, E. *Na'yi* and I holding up a *xala'is* (shell) as part of our *Bak'wamk'ala* learning *lax Dłaxsiwe' tłama'is* during *Gaxalilitso* ceremonial week, *Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

It felt awkward for me to begin my highly active *Kwak'wala* journey outside of my ancestral lands and in the territory of *Snuneymuxw* and the *Hulqwiminum* language. But found the work of Natalie Baloy (2011) focused on urban language learning and honoring the language of the land to be helpful.

Land-based learning in general can be challenging to facilitate as many of our first language *Kwak'wala* speakers are Elderly and often not able to get out on to the land. Safety protocols can also take precedence and may hinder our ability to take in new language if we are concerned about water precautions, wildlife etc. But especially challenging if living away from the homelands with fewer first language speakers and in the territory of others where cultural protocols need to be honored.

Land-based *Kwak'wala* learning seemed a daunting endeavour to take on in an urban centre but I embarked on a land-inspired learning project and recruited members of our *Kwak'wala* community group in *Snuneymuxw* to join me. Each day one of us would share out an image from the great outdoors with *Kwak'wala* along with an acknowledgement of the territory it was on over facebook. Eventually this became a solo initiative but was helpful to my learning and wellness. This land-inspired project encouraged me to get outdoors daily for solo runs or to walk, hike, bike and explore with our family. I noticed what was blossoming and what was returning to the earth, appreciate the changes in seasons and the different sights and smells that each bring about. I was able to use my phone to access the First Voices website to learn the words and sometimes phrases to do with the various plants, flowers, trees, animals, lands and waters I encountered. Each new stimulus was very exciting...including slugs!

Other projects shared over facebook initiated by our household, including other family and community, were a calendar and weather project and these also encouraged us with a deeper

connection to the outdoors and natural world. Our *Kwakwala* months are to do with what is growing such as berries, or what our people would traditionally have been concerned about for food gathering. The daily weather project had us paying attention to the day-to-day changes and encouraged a greater awareness of how the weather impacts us. We also learned that our way of asking about the weather is similar to how you would ask someone about how they are doing. “*Wiksux da 'nalax* – how is the day/weather?” and “*Wiksas xwa 'nalax* – how are you today?” And...we did go to the park! I found playgrounds to be useful for fluency progress and a connection to the outdoors. I also have a deep appreciation for the *Snuneymuxw* lands as this is the location my highly active language learning and then reclamation journey began with our community of learners and *Ni'noxola*.



Figure 70: *T̓gamx'ida's x̄wa t̓l̓ast̓l̓akw* (point at the sea kelp)!
 C. *Mix̄ala* pointing to the *T̓l̓ast̓l̓akw* (sea kelp) I am holding up as part of our *Bak̄wam̄kala* learning *lax̄ Tsax̄is t̓l̓ama'is, Kat̓g'makwinux̄w - T̓li'li'nux̄w*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Another example of land-based learning is an *Ojibwe* immersion school that integrates the tradition of sugaring into the curriculum (Paap & Amman, 2020, Feb 11). In our nation we strip and gather cedar for weaving mostly for ceremonial items and would like to see us infuse this with *Bak̄wam̄kala* learning as one idea for land-based learning. It seems important to be flexible and create new words while maintaining the essence of our *Bak̄wam̄kala* and its connection to the lands it was derived from and agree that we “need to adapt (create new words) or it won’t live” (Whitehead, 2020, 35:00) *M̄alidi*, Sydney Roberts while learning in an urban centre shares the phrase “*Hut̓l̓ilala āwi'nagwis̄ k̄ak̄ut̓l̓a'a gax̄an's* (listen to the land teaching us)” from a *Kwak̄wala* speaking Elder. I find it interesting that land is still a stronghold for learning and connection while living in the city.

Gagamagila

(doing something strange/different)

Urban learning compared to in-community and the influence of online programming



Figure 71: *Ix'akan tlaᖃa dzq̄lxwi* (I like to run)!

Nugwa'qm Yola at Buttertubs marsh *laxa Snuneymuxw*, a greenspace close to our home, where I enjoyed running and including the creatures I encountered in my *Bak'wamkala* learning, *Kikatq'makw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Over my 13 years of active language learning I have fluctuated between urban locations to our homelands and the ancestral lands of our *Kwak'wala Bak'wamkala*. From this experience I have come to understand the differences when learning in the city compared to learning in-community. I have also experienced the shift in programming with online options using zoom that became available with the onset of the covid pandemic.

What I experienced as an urban learner:

- Less first language speakers

- Less funding
- Greater challenges in securing space for community learning
- Greater distance and challenges to attend community programming
- Awkwardness in learning on another language group's territory
- Disconnection from the lands of which your ancestral language was derived
- Smaller groups of community learners
- Greater need for identity, culture and community connection

What I experienced as an in-community learner (the opposite of what is listed above):

- More first language speakers
- More funding to support language learning
- Fewer challenges in securing space for community learning
- Reduced distance and fewer obstacles to attending community programming
- Greater comfort in learning on my language group's territory
- Connection to the lands from which my ancestral language was derived
- Larger groups of community learners
- Greater opportunity for identity, culture and community connection

My *Kwakwala* journey began in the city, carried on with a move to our homelands, became highly active with a relocation to an urban centre and remains a constant in our more recent return to our homeland community. Online programming for our *Kwakwala* language became prevalent during covid times (while our family lived in the city) and has continued to be how many of our programs are facilitated including the ones I am a part of. Due to this shift to online programming my recent experience of urban learning compared to in-community learning is not much different.

Watakikala
(wishing)

Pros/cons of online learning and yearning for more enriched experiences connecting to land and outdoor activities.



Figure 72: *Kakutlan* (learning I am).
Nugwa'am Yola utilizing my laptop as part of my *Bakwamkala* journey,
Katq'makw'inuxw - Rita Taylor, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 2023

Pros of online learning:

- Easier access and ability to sign on to the zoom from anywhere
- Connecting urban and in-community learners
- I can sign on to the zoom and multi-task with homemaking responsibilities
- It is easier for me to join a zoom rather than corralling my children into the vehicle and travelling to an in-person class where they may or may not be welcomed by all
- Zooms directly support with bringing language into the home
- Saves trees! Rather than printed handouts resources can be shared on the screen
- It is possible to feel a sense of “community” online
- It can provide a better structure for class flow and management (it gives less space for unhelpful comments or criticisms and child noise)

Cons of online learning:

- Not all our first language speakers are able to get on to the zoom by themselves, and some do not care for it
- There are certain sounds in *Kwakwala* that are hard to hear over the zoom especially if not previously familiar and learning them first online
- It can be problematic if attendees have internet or log in issues
- If unfamiliar with zoom some attendees forget their microphone is on and their talking and background noise can be disruptive
- We may not always be aware of who is in the room with attendees
- Zoom fatigue and screen sensitivities
- Sometimes people might show up on the screen in their underwear!

I have come to understand the differences when learning in the city compared to learning in-community. I have also experienced the shift in programming with online options using zoom that became available with the onset of the covid pandemic. The biggest difference, in my experience, comparing in-community learning with urban is the greater need for community connection for those living in city centres. Attendees in urban areas may join a *Bakwamkala* group more so to connect with others from their nation with the language component simply being the focus of what brings them together. They may wish for singing, drumming, traditional dance and other cultural practices to be included in programming which are not always specific to the learning of language. For those living in-community they have better access to cultural programming and if joining a *Bakwamkala* initiative will not likely expect a lot of cultural activities to be included. The shift to zoom use due to covid has altered the previously more apparent differences in learning within homelands compared urban. Many learners now join learning programs by zoom from a mixture of locations.

I have largely been “on-the-zoom” as part of my *Bakwamkala* reclamation journey since the onset of covid in 2020 and am feeling fatigued. I have recently been joining an in-person adult immersion program one day per week *lax Ts’algwadi* in the same community *xan sasqmanu’xw* attend school close to our home *lax Gwa’dzi’*. This program utilizes the “where are your keys?” method and takes place in the “treehouse” a small language house. It is a program run through the *Gwa’sala-Nakwaxda’xw* nations and *xan Dlu’li* Zach is one of the facilitators. During my last session with this program, we spent time along the *Quatse (Gwa’dzi’)* river conducting “immersion sprints,” timed one-on-one conversations solely in *xan’s Bakwamkala*. It was such an uplifting experience to be out on our lands speaking our language and I realized how

much I am missing this. It has been a positive experience for me to join this program as learner and be with community in-person and hope to get outdoors more moving forward.

Gilakasda'xw'la
(welcome to you all)

Family-friendly programming

*Hilafalisān's 'nalax **

(fix the world)

galgapotaxan's sasam

tsutama hiluk'wine'

dlu'wida is ma'yuttami

He'am.

Fix the world

Work together for our children,
grandchildren, great-grandchildren
and the unborn

That is all.

Gayutt - Namugwis'wate', George Hunt Sr.(passed)

In my interview with *Lalxsan dala'ogwa*, Keisha Everson, one of the topics that stands out to me is the need for more family friendly programming. Our family attended an online program that ran for several years '*Wigaxan's Yakantalape*' (let's speak together) co-facilitated by *Lalxsan dala'ogwa* and to this day is the only program I have been a part of that fully embraced family learning and catered to various needs of each age group/family member.



Figure 73: *Laxwe'gila* (gathering strength).

Our family wearing our *regalia lax Tsax̱is ṯama'is . Kikata'makw'inukw - Thi'li'nukw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

In my experience of participating/hosting/facilitating community groups in the city I found it a challenge to meet the needs of all age groups attending. So, while families were encouraged and did attend together, the learning activities often seemed to engage the adults more than the children and youth. This is something that bothered me and I struggled with as a facilitator. It is a challenge to meet the needs of all ages and stages especially at a community group where there was an influx of attendees. But for me it wasn't enough that the kids were simply in attendance as us adults engaged in learning our language. Halloween, Valentine's activities etc. catered to children, but the rest was for the adults.

As I have progressed in my learning and sharing of our language I come as a package deal with *x̱n sasqm*. It seems this is known, understood, and accepted by our *Kwak'wala* learning community and various organizations that request my support. However, I have felt and am aware that programming is not always family friendly and not everyone appreciates the presence of children. This is an awkward area and one I feel the need to bring forward for awareness and advocacy. I understand that some programming is specific to adults, and it can be tricky to cater to all ages and stages in community programming, but I do believe it is imperative for all programming to include a family and/or child/youth component.



Figure 74: *'mats̱aẖx̱ da* (what is that)?

Nugwa'qm Yola dhu'w̱n sasqm̱nu'x̱w S̱n'yas (left) & *C. Mixala* (right) engaged in *Bakw̱m̱kala* learning at the Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis*, *Ḵaṯa'makwinux̱w - Tli'li'nux̱w*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

The *Salish* School of Spokane advocates for a transfer system to be included in Indigenous language revitalization programming (Salish School of Spokane, 2020). They

strongly believe any successful ILR effort should have a system of transference from adults to children. We absolutely need to be passing on our language to our younger generations and so it is a must that babies, children, youth be included and welcomed into our learning spaces and programs and that, if possible, segments of the programming be designed for their inclusion and engagement. I agree that “the only way to bring language back is to work with children” (Whitehead, 2020, 22:45).

Examples of online programming embracing family (adults and children):

Wigaxan's yak'antalape (let us speak together) was an online program through the *K'umugwe'* Cultural Society running weekly/biweekly over several years and catered to family pods. It had various games some more engaging for my younger children, and some were a hit with the elders (my eldest and niece). The program also had activities that engaged all ages and some that were more for us parents/adults. This initiative is the only program our family has been a part of that purposefully targeted family groups and made efforts to meet the needs of each age group and encouraged family dialogue. (*K'umugwe'* Cultural Society, 2023)

My younger cousin and I ran a *Kwak'wala* book club for 2 sessions engaging children and parents. Each session we facilitated online learning of 1/20 of our early learner books. The first portion of the session was for children and parents in *Kwak'wala* focused learning of the book. We would then say our goodbyes to our children and carry on with the adults going over the translations and we often would stay on longer to discuss areas of interest. Both the welcoming and departing portions for children in attendance included elaborate efforts to ensure our children felt welcomed and appreciated. I have recently started a 3rd round of this *bukw* club.



Figure 75: *Kakuitlan's* (we are all learning).

Nugwa'am Yola holding *San'yas* with *E. Na'yi* (left) and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett (right) engaged in *Bak'wamkala* learning at the Copper Maker gallery laḡ *Tsaxis*, *Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

As a mother working hard to reclaim our ancestral language, I need to express how important it is for those of us attempting to raise *xan's sasam* (our children) with our language to feel welcomed into all learning spaces. I do believe it is always possible to create components and to be flexible to family needs and parents with young babies. It is possible and it is needed as we need our languages to live in the family home and imperative to support the seemingly few amongst our coastal nations who are striving to learn and raise children with our mother tongues as we “need to be speaking in the home” (Kapashesit, 2023,1:15).

Widzolaḡan's ḡan's kiyos laḡan's sasame'

(where would we be without our children)

Gayutl -'walas Gwa'yam (Richard Dawson), Gwiyam'wǵle' (Tom Dawson, passed)

Nothing for the children/youth, without the children/youth

A *Lakota* documentary captures youth voices humorously and one of the questions asked is: “what if you speak the language but shop at Walmart and drive a big american truck, are you more or less Lakota?”, followed by youth responses, “depends on what kind of truck,” “maybe more [laughs],” “I don’t think you’re more or less,” “you’re still an Indian,” “I love Walmart (in *Lakota*)!” (The Language Conservancy, 2016, 7:40). Similarly, a short film highlights *Kwakwala* learners from the *Tlislakilakw* elementary school *laḡ 'Yalis* in a sweet and sincere way. The question is posed, “why is *Kwakwala* important to you?” and the young children’s responses are: “because... I forgot [laughs],” “I think *Kwakwala* is important because most of my family is *Kwakwala* and I love all my family,” “important because our culture is a part of us, it’s been with us since the beginning of time,” “so um when people say their language, you’ll know their language and saying our language to people they’ll know your language,” “my culture is important because when the elders pass on we won’t be able to learn from them” (Ed Carswell, 2020, 1:00).

Namgis youth from *'Yalis* (Alert Bay) sing about the importance of language and culture and the chorus is “we wanna be heard, we wanna be seen, we’re trying to learn, what they tried to burn, they thought we were gone, they were wrong, the legacy lives on, we gotta be strong” (Nwe Jinan, 2023). We often hear something along the lines of “this is for our children, our future” but I have experienced language and cultural programming that excludes meaningful

child and youth engagement. I am aligned with *Malidi*, Sydney Roberts when she says, “ILR is a youth movement supported by Elders for our future youth” (Joseph et al., 2021, 39:57).

Ensuring the voices of our children and youth are heard and they are welcomed into and engaged in Indigenous language revitalization is imperative, especially with the decline in youth interest evident in this research as we want our young people to remain engaged and encouraged.

Dlugwe'

(treasure)

Yakantala

(language)

Our language as a treasure



Figure 76: *Bakwatalux da Wa'yugwamalax* (sleepy is the baby).
Xan nakagawe' ma'yudlami C. Mixala resting on a log *lax Dłaksiwe' tłama'is,*
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Anton Trueur, *Ojibwe*, puts forward “If you aren’t worried about your language, you should be” (2016) and as Whitehead (2020) shares “the most valuable and intellectual treasure we have is our language”. It has been helpful for me to envision our language as a treasured loved one and a way to encourage others in their language reclamation. A *dlugwe'* with a vast amount of knowledge needed to restore ourselves and ways of being. A *dlugwe'* we want to keep with us to bestow this wisdom on us.

Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesanukw Kwakwala!

(we want *Kwakwala* to live)

Dukwala

(to see)

Worldview

One of the most profound aspects of my *Kwakwala* reclamation path is the ability to see the world as our ancestors did. It has been an awakening to a different way of seeing and being. A lens that feels better, fits better and makes more sense than the prior, a worldview that enables me to carry myself in a grounded and meaningful manner. It is evident many involved in ancestral language learning see the importance in worldview (Albers, et al., 2019; Beaver, 2021; Bommelyn, 2019; Charlo, 2015; Hurtle, 2016; Joseph, et al., 2021; Walkus, 2015; Wilcox, 2019). A *Tolowa Dee-ni'* Elder speaks to worldview being like “pieces of a puzzle put together” and the profoundness of seeing the world “through the lens of the language.” (Bommelyn, 2019).



Figure 77: *Amlux da tsatsadagam laxa tlqma'is* (playing is the little girl on the beach). *Galma'yudlamiE. Na'yi* wearing *xis yayaxwsam* playing on the *tlqma'is lax Dlaksiwe'*, *Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Duxw'isas

(clairvoyant, sees beyond)

Encouragement for the future

X'unei, Lance Twitchell (2023) puts forward “if you want to learn your language, you will need to change your life”. Learning *Kwakwala* for me has been a life changing experience. It began as language learning and at some point, shifted to a reclamation journey. A restoration of our ancestral ways of being and a worldview that I have only come to understand as guided by our language. The way we carry ourselves and connect through language as sacred work is also profound. In the learning spaces we give our language and those who carry our language, our *Ni'noxola*, our first language speakers, the utmost care and respect. Reciprocity is a component

of our language work and as learners we ensure we are giving back to our *Ni'noxsola* as best we can. There are so many benefits to learning and reclaiming our ancestral languages. It has changed my life and have no doubt it has also changed the trajectory of *xan sasəm* life paths for the better. As *Bakwam* people we have so much to gain from the revitalization of our languages and plenty to lose if we don't.



Figure 78: *Kasux da gnanamgas laxa tlamais* (walking is the girl on the beach).
Galma'yudlamiE. Na'yi walking the tlamais lax Tsaxis,
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

I'xdalkwala
(good heart)

Trauma informed practice/lateral kindness

Another area that emerged in my study was consideration for trauma informed practice and lateral kindness within *Bak'wamk'ala* programming. It seems there is a lack of awareness of the intergenerational impacts of trauma and how this influences our learning. My interview with *Hawetlagwila* and *Xa'niyusame'ga* speaks to the impacts of residential and day school on our language. In my *Kwak'wala* learning and reclamation journey I have noticed the lack of trauma informed practices within programs but also as part of individual approaches to teaching.

I have long wanted to explore the possibility of incorporating a trauma informed approach to *Kwak'wala Bak'wamk'ala* teaching and learning. I had planned to do so as part of my coursework when covid arrived and did not get to it then. I have been teaching a Learning to Learn course in our *Kwak'wala Bak'wamk'ala* Certificate Language Program (CILP) and include a trauma informed component. Our students appreciate this component, and it seems that some were not previously aware and/or it helped them to become more aware of how intergenerational trauma impacts our *Kwak'wala* learning.

I plan to create a straightforward user-friendly resource that can be incorporated into our *Dzawada'enukw Bak'wamk'ala* programs as well as other Indigenous language learning programs especially those amongst our *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation. I will refer to the work of Dr. Michael Yellowbird and Gabor Mate as these two have been helpful to my well-being. I will also refer to other work of *Kwakwaka'wakw* members and include inspirational youtube videos that showcase the intergenerational healing possibilities of ancestral language reclamation.

The areas I will cover are: 1) how intergenerational trauma impacts our ability to learn and reclaim our ancestral languages – a brief overview; 2) Importance of safe spaces for learning and how to create them; 3) Activators/triggers and how to navigate them; 4) Importance of regulation and how we can support learners with this; 5) Encouraging our *Ni'nox̄sola* to be trauma informed in their teaching; 6) Ancestral language reclamation can be a healthy addiction/coping mechanism for trauma; 7) Ancestral language reclamation as a suicide prevention strategy; 8) Maintaining sacred spaces for our language (keeping the trauma drama outside of the space); 9) Harsh and/or early correction and laughing is often not helpful to learners; 10) Vastness of what's involved: pronunciation, accent, musicality, intonation, breath and may be physically impossible to make “correct” sounds to start.

Tl̄q'w̄q̄l'ga'tsu

(to be lectured)

“Why bother” conversation with E. *Na'yi* and *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett

Something that came forward in our *Dzawad̄q'enūx̄w* language revitalization planning is the need for a “why bother” resource that provides reassurance for the benefits and importance of *Bak'w̄m̄k̄ala* learning and revitalization. My interview with E. *Na'yi* and *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett is mostly a *dl̄ix̄s'ala* (loving lecture) to them on this. It is a conversational interview with two young teens where I share my perspective of many good things that come from learning our *Bak'w̄m̄k̄ala* of *Kwak'w̄ala* and how ancestral language restoration is integral to our livelihood. It is an endearing *dl̄ix̄s'ala* with youth, who seemed to be losing interest in learning our language where I put forward the following: our language is a *tax̄w̄q̄la* (a loved one) full of wisdom,

knowledge and the ability to restore us and we should do all that we can to keep our loved one with us, our language is a beautiful language and english is kinda lame in comparison, there are huge benefits to bilingualism especially intellectually, in learning our ancestral language we also learn about our worldview (how our ancestors saw the world) and this is incredibly restorative helping us to live life in a better way.

Sanyakola

(being creative together)

Creativity in resource production

I have noticed many of our resources are lacking in creativity and hope to encourage this and artistic flair in video production. The following is the series of videos entitled: 'Wigaxans 'Wi'la *kakutlapa*, a series of 6 videos that showcase creativity and engaging content.



Figure 79: *'Wiga'xan's 'wi'la kakutapa.*
A series of videos from 2021 demonstrating use of *Kwakwala/Bakwamkala.*
Shared from the *Nunwakola Cultural Society* youtube channel.

Episode 1 [5:36]: <https://youtu.be/eFNtpvAGvpQ?si=y9uEESmlDgQ4jtcd>

Episode 2 [10:03]: https://youtu.be/pxKQI7DL5Vw?si=p_QKzAzz91jTGN13

Episode 3 [6:55]: https://youtu.be/eH0EUR55sdE?si=DZpY9lZvFBR82L_E

Episode 4 [9:03]: https://youtu.be/QvA3f8S6Y88?si=dApN1OSJ1Bb_SO-a

Episode 5 [7:25]: https://youtu.be/8UgfOrW_41g?si=ejbSyyRY_mDhw1aR

Episode 6 [8:18]: <https://youtu.be/jIp-QAEys6c?si=lPPPcV2L6bEKRpBy>

Dlo'xsde'yatsi
(goal or net)

Banff Centre for the Arts and Creativity Indigenous Constellations program

In April of 2023 I had opportunity to attend a 3-week program at the Banff Centre for Arts & Creativity - Indigenous Digital Constellations with 7 other participants selected from 50 applicants. It was a big undertaking to be so far away from *xan sasqm* for an extended period but was greatly inspired by the program and other Indigenous creators to ponder possibilities for film production as part of sharing our reclamation journey. At the program I learned about various aspects of digital creation and put together 7 videos using iMovie. Most of these videos are language and movement resource videos, one encourages safe & supportive spaces for both soccer and language learning, and one is a snapshot of our family learning journey. My hope is to encourage creativity and artistic flair in resource creation; I have a longer-term goal of creating fitness videos with our *Bakwamkala* and would like to tell stories of language reclamation through film.



Figure 80: 'wel'mida i'a'ya'su (what can hands do)?
Nugwa'am, Yola showcasing a *Bakwamkala* learning video using creative visuals and audio,
Kikata'makw'inukw - Rita Taylor, Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity, 2023

Ya'wixalala xus ukwine' ka's noke'
 (move your body for your heart and mind)

Language and Movement for Wellness

Combining *Bakwamkala* learning with movement practices has become an impactful part of my personal language reclamation journey. A favorite pastime for me is exercising at home following a youtube program and speaking *Kwakwala* as I move. Previously I had paused the video to write down movements and would later look up words on First Voices to go with each move and was able to build up a substantial amount of vocabulary. Since then, I can carry out a solo immersive workout session in our *Bakwamkala*!

I am also a part of a youth suicide intervention initiative called *Tłokwimasus* (you are strong) and a land-based culturally rooted approach to healing trauma and addictions called *Hase'* (breath of life) *dłu'wan egas 'Nalaga* (Avis O'Brien) where I offer our *Kwak'wala Bak'wamk'ala* alongside trauma informed yoga sessions. Participants have been very appreciative of this incorporation of our language into a regulated practice. Here is a youtube video on the *Tłokwimas* program where I share our *Bak'wamk'ala* alongside yoga and advocate for ancestral language reclamation as part of suicide prevention and wellness:

<https://youtu.be/8dfelF669zU?si=mBRiLMHCtJJnWgq0>

In my search to find other examples of Indigenous language revitalization effort incorporating fitness I found the following two examples: *Karuk Pikship* “shadow” fighters (mixed martial arts and wrestling) and a basketball team incorporating their *Lakota* language into practices. *Pikship* is the *Karuk* word for “shadow” or “phantom” or “fear of the shadow”. It seems the *Karuk Pikship* “shadow” fighters are not necessarily using their *Bak'wamk'ala* during this practice but aligning the sport with their overall ancestral language reclamation initiatives. *Pikship* fighting “teaches cultural aspects of survival beyond wrestling and boxing, emphasizing athleticism, balance, leverage, strength and endurance” (Albers, et al., 2019).

In the documentary by the Language Conservancy (2016), *Rising Voices, Hothaninpi – Revitalizing the Lakota Language*, a basketball coach incorporates *Lakota* into practices with his basketball team. Terms were provided by a *Lakota* Elder that would be “usable” for the sport of basketball including: *kapsisic'a* (dribble), *kah ol iyeya* (pass), *khote'* (shoot), *kassna* (miss) and *yuhpa* (rebound). The coach shared the youth were excited to learn and incorporate these *Lakota* words into their practice. This documentary highlights basketball as a popular sport for the *Lakota* people and showcases a basketball tournament that takes place in the same building

as a *Lakota* language bowl. The basketball tournament is well attended and the language bowl less so. An *Oglala Lakota* teacher Philomine *Lakota* expresses her love for basketball and says, “I believe we need as many people cheering our *Lakota* speakers on as we have in basketball game” (Language Conservancy, 2016).

I can relate to these sentiments expressed by *Lakota* language teacher Philomine. Amongst our *Kwakwaka'wakw* soccer is the dominant sport. Many children, youth, adults and families invest time, energy, resources and money into tournaments that take place along the island (vancouver island) and the mainland during the spring and summer. Many also play league in the fall and winter more so those living in urban areas on the southern part of the island. I have also wished we as a nation could invest as much of ourselves into the revitalization of our ancestral language as we do towards soccer. A dream I have for our nation is to bring back the usIf our *Bakwamkala* on the field... *Kwakwala K'a'yaka* (soccer)!

Kwakwala K'a'yaka
(soccer)

Over the years of my active learning journey, I have made various attempts to incorporate *Kwakwala* into soccer and have found this to be more challenging with adults compared to younger children and then youth being somewhat neutral or in between.

Here is a list of my attempts to encourage *Kwakwala K'a'yaka*:

1) Weekly soccer practices incorporating *Kwakwala k'a'yaka* terms *dlu'wi E. Na'yi* and *dhu'ligas Scarlett laxa Snuneymuxw*

2) Sharing a list of *Kwakwala K'a'yaka* terms followed by a gentle soccer activity with children and parents with our community group at VIU *laxa Snuneymuxw*

3) Entering a mostly adult with some youth team into a soccer tournament with the name *Ki'kayakinukw* (expert soccer players), providing shirts with the phrase “*Kwakwala's gaxan* (speak *Kwakwala* to me)” and incorporating some of our *Bakwamkala* into the team cheers and my personal cheering

4) A scrimmage with a handful of young boys at a *Kwakwala* camp *lax Dlaksiwe'* where I used our *Bakwamkala* as we played

5) A scrimmage with a substantial number of children of varying ages preceded by a circle where I shared some *ka'yaka* terms interactively.

Of these *saka* (5) attempts I will expand on *mat* (2), sharing both a negative and a positive experience. I attempted to start a weekly outing *dhu'wan dhu'ligas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* while living *laxa Snuneymuxw* attempting to incorporate *Kwakwala* learning into our *ka'yaka* practice. I did not know many terms and conducted this learning and teaching of *ka'yaka* terms at the field prior to playing which took away from our practice time and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* were eager to play which impacted their receptiveness to learning the *ka'yaka* terms in our *Bakwamkala* first. I also became frustrated with *xan Galma'yudlami* E. *Na'yi's* seemingly lack of engagement in the overall activity and to this day do not feel good about my response. This initiative did not last long with only 2-3 outings occurring. A better experience was a scrimmage that naturally occurred with a handful of young boys during a *Kwakwala* camp *lax Dlaksiwe'*. By this time, I had built up enough vocabulary to use during the scrimmage and simply just spoke in our *Bakwamkala* while playing. Part way through the scrimmage the boys were calling out in our language while playing too! This was such a joyous occasion for me and one I will always remember. Soccer in the sunshine, barefoot on our homelands, speaking in our ancestral language while playing with *xan's gangnanam* (our children) was incredible!

Paá'yida tsasile'la

(medicine it is to stretch/move around)

Ancestral language reclamation and movement for wellness video



Figure 81: *Tsas'id* (stretch).

Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wan egas Ivy leading group through a cool down stretch incorporating our *Bakwamkala* after session at the Nanaimo boxing club.

Katq'makwinuxw - Anna Kawahara, Serene Studio Co., 2024

The following language and movement video was created in response to the Well for Culture (Luger & Collins, 2018) video challenge to include ancestral language with functional movements. It is a collaborative piece created with *x̱an egas* Ivy Richardson, the founder of Red Girl Rising. It is filmed in the village of *Uḵw̱analis*, located alongside the river of *Gwa'yi*, *awi'nagwis sa Dzawadae'nuxw. Thumas̱n's mu'la* - we are immensely grateful... for this land which upheld us as we captured these functional movements along with our respective sports of boxing and soccer.

Link to video here:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/mgh5owmem1dse0wx05rvg/Ancestral-language-reclamation-and-movement-for-wellness.mp4?rlkey=yfpi6ardqexmr52pgbyvbrewf&e14z1mhc&dl=0>

Red Girl Rising introduces themselves on their website as follows:

Red Girl Rising is a non-profit organization focused on movement as medicine. We collaborate closely with communities to develop empowering and accessible movement programs, camps, and workshops. Additionally, we proudly operate Team 700, British Columbia's first competitive Indigenous youth boxing team, and Wina (meaning warrior in *Kwak'wala*) Wellness, a dedicated safe space for Indigenous women and girls. Our mission is to provide safe, empowering, and accessible movement opportunities for individuals and communities, enabling them to unlock their inherent potential and thrive.

The Well for Culture language and movement video (Luger & Collins, 2018) provided a great deal of unique inspiration for me personally, as I have not encountered any

other resource that brings both ancestral language and movement practices together. I have watched this video many times over the years of actively learning my language and increasing my fitness ability. Their website states:

WELL FOR CULTURE is a social entrepreneurship which aims to reclaim and revitalize Indigenous health and wellness. The Seven Circles is the Well for Culture model for total health optimization. We study and implement the lifestyle teachings of our ancestors, meanwhile incorporating new information to contribute to this ancient and ongoing chain of knowledge. Indigenous culture has always been dynamic, and wellness is an inherent aspect.

Chelsey Luger (Anishinaabe & Lakota) & Thosh Collins (Onk Akimel O'odham) are community health educators and co-founders of Well for Culture, an Indigenous wellness initiative which focuses on reclaiming healthy, balanced lifestyles through ancestral knowledge and Indigenous ideologies. They are the authors of *The Seven Circles: Indigenous Teachings for Living Well*. They are the proud parents of two daughters and reside on Thosh's ancestral home of the On Akimel O'Odham People of AZ, where they're active participants in the community (wellforculture.com).

Here is the link to the Well for Culture – Movement in Indigenous languages video:

<https://youtu.be/f6C9cVxA2ew?si=3iDluMIbcsbhuz7p>

The video created with *xan egas* Ivy Richardson features both multigenerational movement practices and ancestral language learning. We hope to inspire others in bringing together language and movement for wellness.

Functional training and movement have been a part of our Indigenous way of life for hundreds and thousands of years. Our ancestors stayed active all day as the

lifestyle was inherently wellness based. Today it is different, we have to make it a point to move with intention and to stay active. (Thosh Collins in Luger & Collins, 2018).

Infusing our *Bakwamkala* into my fitness routine has been a profound experience for me personally. Embodied learning is highly beneficial not only for language learning progression but for holistic wellness. Exercise and ancestral language reclamation are powerful addiction and suicide prevention strategies and integral to our collective healing as *Bakwam* people. We hope to encourage others with both movement practices and *Bakwamkala* language reclamation as part of our personal, family and community wellness.



Figure 82: *T̓sas'idas x̓us ayasu* (stretch your arm).

Nugwa'qm Yola leading women's group in a stretch incorporating our *Bak'w̓mkala* at the Nanaimo boxing club.

Katq'makwinuxw - Anna Kawahara, Serenc Studio Co., 2024

Terms in our Ancestral Language Reclamation and Movement for Wellness video:

'Wi'laman's mans'ida's (let's all try)!

Wiga'o'amx (just do it)!

A'ekakilala's xus ukwine' (take care of your body),

A'ekakilala's xus noke' (take care of your heart/mind),

A'ekakilala's xus bakwine' (take care of your spirit),

Laxwalapa li'laxwala (love each other loved ones).

He'am (that is all).

Kwamx'i – bend down or over

Kwamx'id – to bend down or over (First Voices)

Kwamx'ida's – bend down or over, command

We have used *Kwamx'i* and its variations to accompany squat, modified squat and lunge.

Daxwa – jump (*Daxw'i* – jump, First Voices)

Daxw'id – to jump

IDaxw'ida's – jump, command

We have used *Daxw'i* and its variations to accompany jumping lunge.

Tlakwa – press or push away (also to blame, First Voices)

Tlakw'id – to press or push away

Tlakwusto – to press or push away upwards

We have used *Tlakwa* and its variations to accompany push up.

Nix̣a – pull (First Voices)

Nix̣'id – to pull

Nix̣usto – pull upwards (*Nix̣ustud* – to pull something or someone up, First Voices)

We have used *Nix̣a* and variations for pulling up bands/kettle bell and pull ups.

Ḳasa – walk

Ḳas'id – to walk

Ḳas'ida's – walk command

Dẓalx̣wa – run (*Dẓalx̣w'i* – run, First Voices)

Dẓalx̣w'id – to run

Dẓalx̣w'ida's – run command

Ḳa'yaka – kick or soccer

Ḳa'yax'id – to kick or play soccer

Ḳa'yax'ida's – kick or play soccer command

The sport of boxing is featured in our video, and the following words and audio can be found on First Voices.

Max̣a – punching

Max̣'id – punched, struck with fist

Max̣apa – strike each other or to box



Figure 83: *Mxaxpa* (punching/boxing)!
C. *Mixqala* boxing with *xan egas* Ivy's *abamp* at the Nanaimo boxing club.
Katq'makwinuxw - Anna Kawahara, Serenc Studio Co., 2024.

Wax'mex kałala, oxse'misaŋ la
(although I was afraid, I still went)

Kwakwaka'wakw fashion show



Figure 84: *Wina* (warrior).

At the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show *xan egas Gatu* painted the *gugwame* of those wearing the *Kwakwala k'as'gne'* repurposed with *Bakwam* bling to promote the warriorism involved in ancestral language reclamation.

Kikata'makw'inukw - *Yola*, 2023

In April of 2025 I took part in the 2nd annual Kwakwaka'wakw fashion show lax Gwa'dzi'. An inspiring event organized by a young relative Aurellia Nelson. I was excitedly nervous to be a part of this large gathering of approximately 300 people and told myself I needed to be brave in my objective to bring awareness to our *Bakwamkala* revitalization and reclamation efforts. In a two-week period, I repurposed 9 of our *Kwakwala kikas'ane'* for the runway. Our *kikas'ane'* had previously been used as part of family and community language learning projects to promote our *Bakwamkala*. I repurposed some shirts with our *Bakwam* bling – buttons, beads, dentalium, ermine and others were more playfully revamped with fringe and edgy cuts. I invited other moms and children who have been a part of our *Bakwamkala* programming in our nation to join in this endeavour. Following the runway portion, myself and *xan sasam* took to the stage. *San'yas* led us out dancing in his *hamsaml* and me, *xan dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, E. *Na'yi* and C. *Mixgla* stood behind him dancing on the spot supporting him. This was a profound experience for me as it was *San'yas*' first-time dancing publicly with his *hamsaml*. At first, I was nervous but then came to realize that he is very much interconnected with his *hamsaml* and essentially becomes one with it and has confidence in his ability to dance with it no matter the location. Following *San'yas* dancing in his *hamsaml* the MC spoke to the *tsi-tsep* created for my daughters as part of my dissertation. It was a profound experience overall to take part in this fashion show to share of my work and bring awareness to our *Bakwamkala*. It felt like an innovative way to engage with community both *Bakwam* and others as to the importance of our ancestral language. It was not necessarily adding to my language learning, but it fed my creative spirit in a meaningful way and reminded me that not everything needs to be proficiency focused. I have come to know awareness and activism are important components of this ILR work.



Figure 85: *Duxw'ida's x̱an ḵas'ane'* (look at my shirt)!
S̱n'yas wearing his repurposed *chilkat* style tunic and *Kwakwala ḵas'ane'* at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.
Ḵaṯmakwinux̱w - Paṯalagi'laḱw, Kayla Gambler, 2025

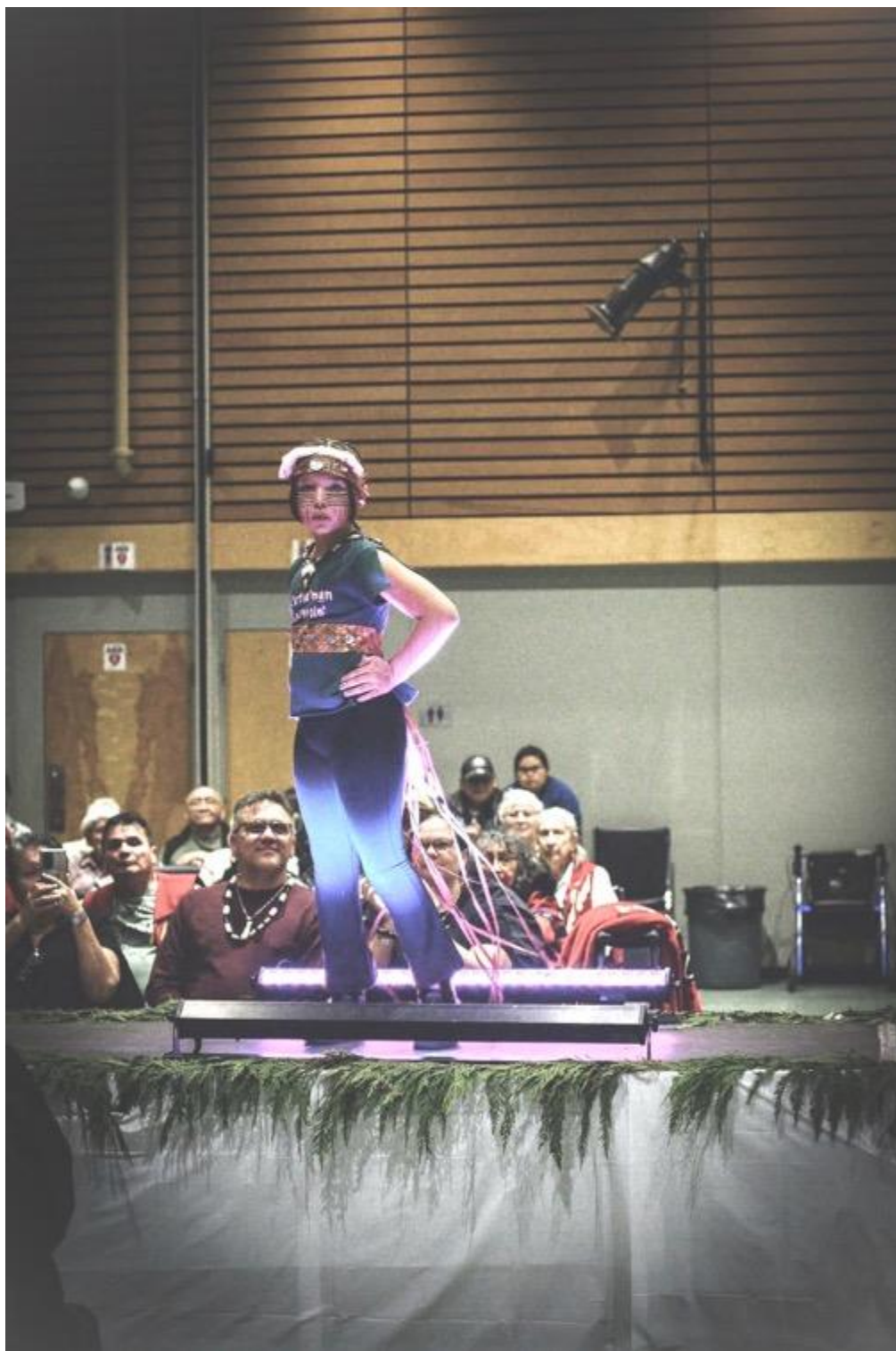


Figure 86: *Ḳakūtla'man Kwak'wale'* (I am learning Kwak'wala).
C. *Mixgala* wearing her repurposed Kwak'wala *kas'ane'* with a weaved cedar belt and tail at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show. *Ḳatq'makwinuxw – Patlalagi'lakw*, Kayla Gambler, 2025



Figure 87: *Kakutla'mas Kwakwale'* (are you learning Kwakwala)?
Dlu'li'gas Scarlett wearing a repurposed Kwakwala *kas'ane'* with *gagaləm* (ermine) and *gigabəm* (buttons) at the
Kwakwaka'wakw fashion show.
Katq'makwinuxw - Patlalagi'lakw, Kayla Gambler, 2025

The following are the write ups for most of the *kíkás'ane'* as they walked the runway, read out by the MC on my behalf (the bolded are the phrases featured on the *Kwakwala kíkás'ane'*):

Kákutla'mas Kwakwale' (are u learning *Kwakwala*)?

E, Kákutla'man Kwakwale (yes, I am learning *Kwakwala*).

A handful of these repurposed *Kwakwala kíkás'ane'* have this phrase. An empowering phrase to learn and express in beginning your *Bakwamkala* reclamation journey. The hope is to encourage and inspire those attending the *Kwakwaka'wakw* (*Kwakwala* speaking peoples) fashion show in learning our language. Also, to encourage fun and creativity in *Bakwamkala* learning!

'wi'lan's sasqm laxwala nukwa (all our children are loved).

A phrase from our beautiful *Noxsola* Isabel (Robertson) Seward. *Kíkás'ane'* created in honor of our residential school survivors thinking especially of *Yola's Abamp* and her siblings who were taken from their village of *Ukwánalis* and forced to attend St. Mike's in Alert Bay. *Yola's sasqm* are the first in 3 generations to be raised with our *Bakwamkala*. At this *Kwakwaka'wakw* (*Kwakwala* speaking peoples) fashion show you will see this *kás'ane'* repurposed with a *hamsqml* image from *Yola's xwanukw* (child) *San'yas*, age 6, who loves to dance and draw the *hamsqml*!

Ikla (be nice), ***A'ekakila*** (take care).

Promoting *Laxwalapa Li'laxwala* an endearing phrase from our beautiful *Noxsola'wale'* *Tlatlasimo'ga* (Sally Williams) for pink shirt day. This shirt has been repurposed for this *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show with ancestral and contemporary touches by *xis xwanukw* *Calai Mixgla*, age 8, who at the age of 4 referred to herself as a "*Kwakwala* princess, living in a *Kwakwala* world!" as she sang! A collaborative piece originally for the

Nanaimo Aboriginal Centre with image by Calvin Hunt created for his daughter Ali Hunt and phrases from Carla *Maxmuwidzumga* Voyageur.

Wixan's 'wi'la k'akut'lap'a (let's learn together)!

Bakwamkala reclamation is a collaborative learning journey! We all have our language within us and the ability to contribute and learn from one another in its revitalization. As part of their journey, they have created a learning series encouraging this idea of learning together. A set of 6 youtube videos with the *Nunwakola* Cultural Society created for *gangnanam* by our *gangnanam*. One of these "*Wixan's 'wi'la k'akut'lap'a*" *K'as'ane'* originally made for this video series has been repurposed for this *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show with "*Bakwam* Bling" (buttons, beads and ermine).

Nugwa'am (I am)

One of the most profound parts of *Yola's* *Bakwamkala* reclamation journey has been the inclusion of our language in the coming-of-age ceremonies for her eldest daughter E. *Na'yi* and *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett. One of the *Kwakwala Ki'k'as'ane'* (shirts) showcased at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show was originally made for her eldest daughter. The phrase *Nugwa'am* (I am) *Na'yi* (fallen snow) is printed on this *K'as'ane'*. One of our first teachings in *Bakwamkala* reclamation is *Nugwa'am* (I am) and provides the opportunity to share of yourself and all that you are and who and where you connect to.



Figure 88: *Wixan's 'wi'la K'akut'apa* (let us learn together)!
Egas La'stutsalas (Jessica Barudin) wearing a repurposed *Kwakwala kas'ane'* with *gagalam* (ermine) and *gigabam*
(buttons) at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.
K'ata'makwinuxw - Pat'alagi'lakw, Kayla Gambler, 2025



Figure 89: *Nugwa'am* (I am)!

La'stutsa'las' daughter Maya wearing a repurposed *Kwakwaka'wakw* *kas'ane'* with elements of our *Gaxalilt'so* coming-of-age ceremony at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show. *Katq'makwinuxw - Patlq'lagi'lakw*, Kayla Gambler, 2025.

The *Nugwa'am Na'yi K̄as'ane'* has been repurposed with elements from our *Kwakwaka'wakw* coming-of-age ceremony – goat's wool straps, dentalium, *tistak̄wa* (earrings), *t̄la'yala* (trade beads), *gi'gigabam* (buttons), *gagal̄am* (ermine). A tribute to the importance of uplifting and honouring our young woman.

'Wixstuda's Gax̄an's (let's lift each other up)!



Figure 90: *Tistak̄wa* (earrings)!

Egas La'stutsalas' older daughter Maya wearing repurposed *Kwakwala k̄as'ane'* honoring our coming-of-age ceremonies with repurposed *tistak̄wa* on the back at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.

Kat̄makwinux̄w - Pat'lagi'lakw, Kayla Gambler, 2025



Figure 91: *Kwala, Laxwa, Da'la* (live, love, laugh).

Egas La'stutsalas' younger daughter Lila wearing a *Kwakwala kas'ane'* repurposed to honor our women at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.

Kata'makwinuxw - *Pat'la'lagi'lakw*, Kayla Gambler, 2025

Kwála, Łaxwála, Da'la (Live, Love, Laugh)

This *Kás'ane'* (shirt) with these encouraging phrases has been repurposed with “*Bakwám Bling*” (buttons, cedar, fringe) in honor of our women. In many of our *Bakwámkala* programs it is our women working hard in the revitalization of our language. While men and others are always welcome too it is important to acknowledge and give credit to our *tsi'tsadaḵw*, our life givers, for the important work they are doing.

Kwakwalala's gaxan (speak *Kwakwála* to me).

A couple of the repurposed shirts have this phrase. An encouragement to speak our language and use what you know as often as possible. For those attempting to raise children with our *Bakwámkala* it helps greatly if you can also speak to them in our language using what you know as every little bit helps!

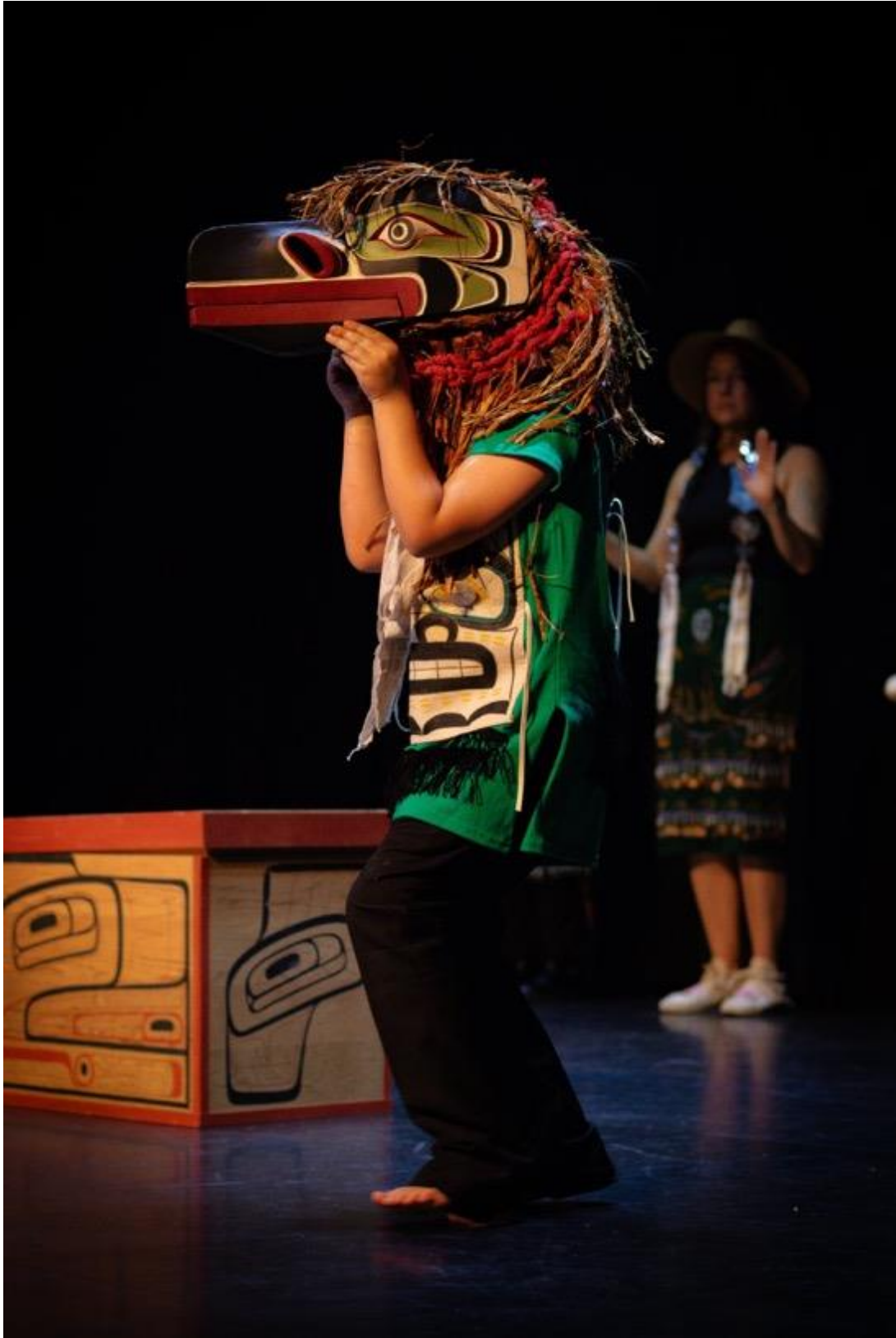


Figure 92: *Hqmsqmla* (dancing the *hqmsqml*).
Sqn'yas dancing with his *hqmsqml* at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show with myself *xis qbamp* behind him.
Kata'makwinuxw - *Pat'lalagi'lakw*, Kayla Gambler, 2025



Figure 93: *Yá'winuxwida hamsqmla* (the dancer in the *hamsqml* is a good dancer).
Sqn'yas dlu'wis hamsqml and C. *Mixala* and myself dancing behind him at the *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show.
Kat'makwinuxw - Pat'lalagi'lakw, Kayla Gambler, 2025



Figure 94: *Tsitsep* (dance aprons)!

C. *Mixgla*, myself, E. *Na'yi* & *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett sharing about ceremonial pieces created as part of dissertation.
Katq'makwinuxw - *Pat'lalagi'lakw*, Kayla Gambler, 2025

Dudak'wilela

(looking about)

Duxwsi'stala

(looking around)

Ama'ya'nakwala

(becoming smaller)

Summary of *Mu* (4) - Diverse topics in ILR occurring outside of the home

This section encapsulates a wide range of topics looking beyond language learning in the home *dhu'wan sasam*, outside of our household, and to do with the greater scope of ILR,

Story (telling/ing/work) - In this section I include stories from our *Noxsola* and how this ability to tell stories could become a “lost art.” This includes orating *nuygm* (stories) in our language but also the importance of story (telling/ing/work) in ancestral language reclamation as they are each essential aspects of this work.

Land-inspired, language of the river...relating to *Gwa'yi* - I have come to know land connection is crucial no matter your location and it is vital to honor the language of the land you are living and learning on. I have also become highly aware of the uniqueness of living alongside a river and how this heavily influences our *Dzawada'enuxw* language revitalization as our *Ukwānālis* village is alongside *Gwa'yi*. Land based learning (programming out on the land or water) can be challenging especially with Elderly speakers and land-inspired with the use of resources like First Voices can be more feasible taking place in the home or classroom or gentle outdoor adventures.

Urban vs. In-Community, pros/cons - It seems to me urban learners' have a greater need for community and cultural connection in comparison with those living in the homelands and zoom learning has minimized the differences between in-community learners from those in the city as many programs are now online with students from various locations.

Online learning, pros/cons - I am zoom fatigued from being predominantly “on-the-zoom” since the onset of covid in 2020 going on 6 years. I have just recently joined an in-person adult immersion program one day per week in the community of *Tsālgwadi* next door to me and this is helpful to be out in community and learning in physical spaces with *ti'laxwəl* (loved ones).

Family-friendly programming, including wise-words-of-wisdom *gayutl Namugwis'wāle'* - I have experienced challenges as both a facilitator and mother learner with family-friendly

programs. I found it tricky to cater to all ages and stages as a community facilitator but do strongly believe it is important for all programs to include a child/youth component, the School of Spokane puts forward that a transfer system is imperative as part of successful revitalization and I align with this and also know it is important for families to feel welcomed into learning spaces as a package deal.

Inclusivity of the voices of our children and youth - It is imperative that child and youth perspectives are considered in *Bakwamkala* programming and if the program is meant for them their voices should be centred in the work. I have witnessed programming where adult egos have negatively influenced our younger generations participation, and this results in discouragement. We all can benefit from uplifting one another and keeping our *kwi'kwala'yu* (reasons for living) needs at the forefront will do so. '*Wixusto gaxan's* - lift each other up!

Our language is a *dhugwe'* (treasured loved one) - I agree "the most valuable and intellectual treasure we have is our language" and I like to view *xan's Bakwamkala* as a *laxwala* (loved one), as its own entity, with its own energy, and spirit. This perspective helps me to carry on through the trials and tribulations of this deep work in reclamation. My efforts are driven by my desire to have *xan laxwala* (my loved one) survive and thrive and to do so with the utmost *laxwala* (love) and *maya'xala* (respect) for its existence and nurturance of *xan noke'* (my heart and mind).

Worldview – In this reclamation of who I am as a *Bakwam* through the learning of our language I am beginning to see the world as our ancestors did and it feels very restorative. Our people's way of being in this world in connection to *bakwine'* (spirit), to *xan's qwi'nagwis* (our lands/waters) and to each other is grounded in *laxwalapa* (love for each other) and

maya'xqalapa (respect for each other) and is a beautiful way to be in this earthly realm. If more of us carried ourselves in this way our world would be a better place.

Encouragement for the future – Learning my language has been life changing and deeply restorative and I have no doubt the trajectory of *xan sasam*'s life has changed for the better as well. I hope others will take inspiration from this and embark on their own journey of reclaiming their ancestral language.

Trauma Informed Practice/lateral kindness – I have noticed a lack of Trauma Informed Practice within our nation's ancestral language learning programming, our *Bakwamkala* revitalization initiatives could benefit from greater awareness of how intergenerational trauma impacts learning, and a resource and/or workshop for both teachers, including first language speakers, and students in beginning learning would be helpful.

Why bother? - This was identified as a need with our *Dzawada'enuxw* language revitalization planning program, information on the benefits of engaging in the revitalization of our language and why we should bother with such an undertaking. My conversational interview with *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett & E. *Na'yi* seems a good fit for this as it is mostly me giving them a *dlixs'ala* (loving lecture) on why they should bother.

Creativity in resource production – I have noticed many of our resources are lacking in creativity and hope to encourage more of this in my work. I have linked our series of 6 youtube videos entitled: *'wiga'xan's 'Wi'la kakutlapa* - let's learn together! These resources came into fruition to support *xan's gangananam* (our children) in fun and engaged youtube learning. This series features *xan's gangananam* including *xan sasam* to capture the interest of *gangananam Bakwamkala* learners.

Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity Indigenous Constellations program – I had the opportunity to participate in a program at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity and created a collection of videos using iMovie. As someone who is not tech savvy this was a big deal for me. It was also a great experience to work with other Indigenous creators from across the country and consider possibilities for resource creation, both for *Bak'wamk'ala* learning and informative, as well as storytelling. The short videos I created at this program included a snapshot of our family learning (storytelling) with the rest to do with language and movement (mostly learning of movements in *Bak'wamk'ala*) including one outlining the importance of supportive environments for both ancestral language learners and soccer players (informative). I hope to share these videos on youtube in near future encouraging these ideas of creativity in resource production, storytelling, encouraging spaces for learners of both language and soccer, and infusing ancestral language with movement practices.

Language and Movement for Wellness (*Kwak'wala k'a'yaka* & video) – In this portion I share of my home workouts and how incorporating our language creates highly enjoyable solo immersion sessions for myself, I speak to the *Tlok'wimas* (you are strong) – Indigenous youth intervention initiative and *Hase'* (breath of life) – Land-based culturally rooted approach to healing trauma programs I support infusing *xan's Bak'wamk'ala* with yoga (gentle movements and breathing). *Kwak'wala k'a'yaka* – Here I speak to my efforts to develop this notion of blending our language into soccer bringing forward the greater receptiveness of *xan's gangananam* (our children), Video – In collaboration with Red Girl Rising and taking inspiration from Well For Culture I have included a video entitled:

Ancestral language and movement for wellness, encouraging the inclusion of our language into functional movements and sport (boxing and soccer specifically).

Kwakwaka'wakw fashion show – In this segment I highlight my participation in a local fashion show. A brave initiative to bring awareness of our revitalization and reclamation efforts to the local community of *Gwa'dzi'*, showcasing *na'na'ma* (9) repurposed *Kwakwala* *kas'ane'* previously used in our programs featuring phrases such as: “*Wi'lan's sasqm laxwqla nukwa*” (all our children are loved) and “*Ikla, A'ekakila*” (be nice, take care), created in collaboration with *ti'laxwql* (loved ones) honoring residential school survivors and encouraging kindness, for orange and then pink shirt day. I also shared the ceremonial pieces created for *xan sasqm*, about our *Bakwamkala* learning and my connected doctoral journey. This was a huge step out of my comfort zone and did not include any new language learning but seemed a worthwhile endeavour in advocating for *xan's Bakwamkala* to the residents of Port Hardy (both Indigenous and others).

Tsepila, Saḱa #5 – Validation of ceremonial pieces

Kiḱaṣ'u (*P'asa*/ceremonial family treasures)

Dti'dlugwe' (treasures)

Yagwam (gift/present given at a *P'asa*)

Yaḱwima (gift received at a *P'asa*)

This section features the **ceremonial pieces created for *xan sasam***, the *Tsitsep ḱa'e E. Na'yi dlu' C. Miḱala*, the *ḱamsamḱ ḱa'e Saṅ'yas*, **and the dedications for each of them**. This is my *HaseIgaxan* (love gift/breath of life in connection to myself... *xis Abamp*).



Figure 95: *Dlugwe'* (treasure).

Ceremonial pieces created for *xan sasam* as part of dissertation - *tsep ḱa'e E. Na'yi*, *ḱamsamḱ ḱa'e Saṅ'yas*, & *tsep ḱa'e C. Miḱala*, *ḱata'makwinuxw – Yola*, 2024

In this final segment I relate the ceremonial use of the completed *Tsep* to *Hase' Gaxan* (love gift/breath of life). I have included the terms: *K'ik'as'su* (*Pasa*/ceremonial family treasures), *Dli'dlugwe'* (treasures), *Yagwam* (gift/present given at a *Pasa*), & *Yakwine* (gift received at *Pasa*) relating to the completed *Tsep* as they are now a part of our ceremonial family treasures for my treasures (*xan sasam*) and have been gifted to them at our family *Pasa* (potlatch). The *Tsep* are also my *Hase' Gaxan* for *xan sasam*, a gift of love and my breath of life to them. These ceremonial items will carry on with them after my earthside time is done.

Tsitsakalames Yola

(Yola's stories)

Storying and storywork of ceremonial pieces created for *xan sasam* and how they relate to our family history of language loss and current journey of reclamation.

Dlugwe', is used here as a reference to both ceremonial pieces and children. As part of my dissertation outputs, I have created *dlugwe'* for *xan dlugwe'* - 2 *Tsitsep* for *xan gi' gananamgas* E. Na'yi and C. *Mixqala* as well as commissioned a carved mask for *xan ganal'ge'* (my youngest) *San'yas*. I appreciate the opportunity to be creative and produce elements aligned with our *Bak'wam* (Indigenous/human) ways of being. These *dlugwe'* will carry on as family heirlooms and will continue to tell our household's story of ancestral language reclamation for generations to come. These pieces have been a labour of love, like our *Kwakwala* journey. They are wearable art and I have added unique detail not often seen on our current *Tsitsep*. E. Na'yi and C. *Mixqala* will use these *Tsitsep* during our dances and ceremonies and *San'yas* can make use of the

hamsamł, practicing as a youngster who one day may express this *hamsamala* through dance ceremony *łaxa Gukwdzi* once older.



Figure 96: *'wi'lamənuɣw gayutł łaxa atłi* (we all come from the forest).
Sən'yas, dlu'wis hamsamł, C. Miɣala & E. Na'yi wearing their *tsep*,
Kikata'makw'inukw - Tli'li'nukw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Each piece connects to a different aspect of our language reclamation journey.

Galma'yudłami E. Na'yi's *tsep* is a replica of *xan gagas'wale* dance apron, my mother's mother who passed shortly after giving birth to my mother in our village of *Ukwənalis*. This *tsep* connects to our family history of loss and reclamation on my mother's side, tied to our *Musgamakw Dzawada'enuɣw* and *Kwakwəka'wakw. Nakagawe' ma'yudłami* C. Miɣala's *tsep* is a collaborative piece and was sewed and designed with bells attached long ago by *xan Ump'wale'* and/or *xan Gagas'wale*. This *tsep* connects to our *Haitzaqv* history and relates to the cultural

revitalization work of *x̄an Ump'wale* and the language reclamation work of *x̄an Gagas'wale*. It relates to my childhood years *lax Wáglisla* where my love of our ancestral languages began through ceremonial song and dance. *Alxtse ma'yudlami Sal'yas' hamsamł* wIs commissioned as a gift to him responding to his interest, since infancy, in our *hamsamala*. It is a symbol of my commitment to him, and our household, to continue this journey in recovering our *Kwakwala* language and ways of being.

In this concluding section I have written a dedication to each of *x̄an sasqm*. These dedications accompany the ceremonial items, *ma'l tsep dlu' 'ngm hamsamł* that I made for them. Each piece includes their birth story, names (both *Bakwam* and english) and speaks to their personal *Bakwamkala* journey with me as connected to our household family.

Ump'wale offers a teaching in Robes of Power (Jensen & Sargent, 1987) stating that for a ceremonial piece to be validated it should be presented in a public ceremony prior to being used. It was important for me to honor this teaching and a meaningful way to complete the process of creating these ceremonial pieces for *x̄an sasqm* as part of this dissertation work. I was able to do this at our Willie family *Pasa lax Ukwānalis* in May of 2025.

At our *Pasa* I was able to take the floor with our immediate family including *x̄an abamp* Emily, *tsa'ya* Tracy, *wakwa* Toby, *dlu'li'gas* Brooklynn & *x̄an sasqm* E. Na'yi, C. Mixala & *San'yas*. I was able to present my girls *dlu'wis Tsitsep* but not *San'yas dlu'wis hamsamł* and substituted with another *tsep* previously commissioned for my eldest. In this presentation *x̄an Abamp* put the replica of *x̄an Gagas'wale's tsep* on E. Na'yi, *x̄an tsa'ya* put the *Haitzaqv tsep* on C. Mixala and *x̄an wakwa* put the *chilkat tsep* on *San'yas*. I also put a tunic made for my late brother on *x̄an dlu'li'gas* Brooklynn. I was able to speak to the pieces and the accompanying dedications to *x̄an sasqm*. I shared about my simultaneous *Bakwamkala* and doctoral journey and

the positive impacts it has had as an encouragement to others in their learning. I distributed 40 sets (\$2800) worth of books as part of the giveaway and offered an online book club *dhu'wǎn tsa'ya Amyaxid* to learn with the books (which is taking place currently).

Now that the *Tsitsep* have been formally presented and validated in ceremony they can be used by my girls in our dances and ceremonies and live on as *Hase' gaxǎn*. My love gift and breath of life to them telling our story of *Bak'wǎmkala* reclamation.



Figure 97: *'Widas gayutli?* (where are you from)
Sgn'yas wearing his *hamsqml*, myself, *C. Mixala* & *E. Na'yi* wearing their *Tsitsep* created as part of dissertation *lax Tayagul atli*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

He'man galma'yudłami Na'yi
(my first-born fallen snow)



Figure 98: *Iktšqm* (abalone shell).

Galma'yudłami E. Na'yi wearing her *tsep*, a replica of *xan gagas 'wale*, created for her as part of my dissertation and an abalone shell, dentalium and beaded ceremonial piece my siblings and I inherited from *xan's Ump'wale'*
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Labalisatłan łaxwalaņukwtłus *

(I will love you forever)

O'amtłan hayulis ix'aktłus,

Wawasdamtłan k'walał,

Sux'se'amtłan wa'yugwamalał

Gayutł - Mamalika'laga (Irene Cook),

Tłakwadzi (Norman Glendale) &

Gwi'mo'las (Vera Newman)

I'll love you forever,

I'll like you for always,

as long as I'm living

my baby you'll be.

Gayutł - Robert Munsch



Figure 99: *Mitsa* (kiss)!

*Nugwa'qm Yola dlu'wan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi in our yayaxwsam lax Tayagul tlamais.
Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, 2016*

Gilakas'la Emaeya Na'yi, xqn #1 ('nqm),

Thumasqn laxwqlanukwthus (so much love I have in me for you). My first born, the one who made me a mother, the one who inspired my start in learning *xqn's Bakwamkala* (our language).

In this dedication to you *xqn #1 ('nqm)* I will share your birth and naming story, reflect on our (my and your) language learning, tell stories (the good, the bad and the silly) and express my hope for you as part of this ongoing reclamation journey. I will also elaborate on the *tsep* (dance apron) I have made for you and the history of this replica piece.

Ma'yudlam

(to be born)

IDligam

(name)

Nuyam

(story)

Your birth and naming story...

After 36 hours of labour, you were born by c-section on December 22, 2010, weighing close to 10 pounds! I wanted to name you *Maya'xq̄la* (concept of respect) and to call you Maya for short but numerous baby girls were named Maya just before your birth and opted to go with Emaeya instead. You are named after *Ada* Emily May (*x̄is aḅḡmp* was also an Emily) and *x̄us Ump sa gigagas'w̄ale* (grandmothers-passed) Emma and Mae. Your middle name is *Na'yi* (fallen snow) as you were born in the winter. I found this word on the First Voices website and checked with our *Noxsola* (wise one) Oma Glow to ensure it was okay to give you this name.



Figure 100: *Wixusto gax̄n's* (lift up each other)!

E. *Na'yi* being uplifted *dlu'wis gi'gagamp Hi'mas La'atlas*, Keith Gladstone (left) & *Gigame Tlasutiwalis Nasamyus*, Calvin Hunt (right) at 3 months of age when receiving first name *Halulu* (butterfly). *Katq'makwinux̄w* - Shirley Hall, 2011

You have also been gifted the following *Bak'wamx̄tle'* (Bak'wam name[s]):

Hqmumu (butterfly) – given to you at 3 months of age, March 2011, *lax Wáglišla* (in Bella Bella) at our family's memorial *P̄asa* for *x̄n's Ump'w̄le' dlu' Gagas'w̄le'* (our father passed, and grandmother passed), hosted by *La'atlas*, Keith Gladstone, *Haiłzaqvala*

Anisalaga (*Anis* – aunt, everybody’s aunt/chief aunt) – given to you at your *Hilugwila* (the right time) ten moons naming ceremony, October 2011, hosted by *xus G̃a'agamp* *Calvin and Marie Hunt *lax Tsaxis* with the name coming through *xus Gagamp*’s older brother *Namugwis* George and his wife Mary Hunt, *Kwakwala*

Ohanagiidi (beautiful eagle child) – given to you at the age of 5, October 2016, by Robert Davidson at his *P̃asa lax Haida Gwaii* in connection to his relationship with *xus Gagamp* *Calvin, *Haida*

Axtsanin (generous with gifts) – given to you at the age of 6, July 2017, at *xus isa'ya* Calai *Mixala sa Hilugwila* hosted by *xus G̃a'agamp* *Calvin and Marie Hunt *lax D̃laxsiwe'* with the name coming through Claire *Hawilthpaeesah* Newman on *xus Gagamp*’s *Mowachut* side, *Nuuchahnulth*

Thisalagi'lakw (sun maker) – given to you at the age of 11, October 2022, at *xus 'nula* Scarlett’s *Gaxalitso* (coming-of-age ceremony) held by your *G̃a'agamp* *Calvin and Marie Hunt *lax Tsaxis* to complete the private *Ixantsila* (menstrual care) & *Gaxalitso* (coming through) ceremonial week conducted for you during the covid pandemic in April of 2011 at 10 years of age *lax D̃laksiwe'*, *Kwakwala*

**Gigame Tlasutiwalis Nasamyus* - Calvin Hunt (*xus gagamp*)

Ikida 'wi'la'mola

(it's good to travel together)

Our *Bakwamkala* Journey



Figure 101: *Tsats'q'yasola* (siblings of same sex).

E. *Na'yi* and C. *Mixala* wearing their *yayaḡwsam* (*chilkat*) *laḡ Dłaksiwe ḡwi'nagwis*.
Katq'makwinuḡw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

We lived in Victoria at the time of your birth and my *Bakwamkala* journey began in your first years with me attending a weekly community class with you in tow. You were so *amabidu* (small) and so *tsits'a'nikala* (cute) with your *'walas gi 'ga'yagas* (big eyes), *luḡwsam ḡansas* (round nose) and long black, wavy hair. You were an easy-going child, and it was effortless to bring you to these *Kwakwala* classes.



Figure 102: *'wiga'xan's 'Wi'la kəkutłapa* (let us all learn together)!
 E. Na'yi on my lap, Natalie Hunt (holding a ball) in front of us, Ada Marie Hunt beside us
 and Robin Hunt (far right) at a Kwakwaka'wakw community class *lax T'samas*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Umagila'ogwa, Ruth Lyall, 2012

Initially these classes were held at a public elementary school (Craigflower Elementary, if I recall correctly) in *T'samas* (Victoria) and facilitated by Chris Cook the third (a distant relative of yours on your Hunt side). After Chris moved back to *'Yqilis* I began to host the classes at my workplace of Hulitan Family and Community Services with the late *Tlatlakul*, Trish Rosborough (also a distant relative of yours on your Hunt side) facilitating with the help of *Anis* Fuzzy (Florence) (*xus Gagamp's* sister) and the late Freda Shaughnessy. Our learning group was small but sweet. Trish was a gentle facilitator with a variety of child friendly and fun activities.



Figure 103: *A'yapkas* (having fun)!
E. Na'yi dlu'wis Ump & Ada Marie at our Kwakwala community class *lax T'sa'mas, K'atq'makwinuxw - Umagila'ogwa*, Ruth Lyall, 2012

We moved to *Tsaxis* when you were almost three years old in October of 2013 with the hope of connecting you to your ancestral homelands, language, culture, family and community. You attended preschool at *Kwigwis* daycare and carried on to *Wagalus* school where you were a part of the language and cultural program. My *Kwakwala* journey began to ramp up during this time but I am not sure if you would have seen or felt this as I was attending community learning groups/programs more regularly but don't recall bringing that language into our family home.

Interestingly, it wasn't until we moved to *Snuneymuxw*, away from the ancestral lands of our *Bakwamkala*, that I began to use our language within our household.

We moved from *Tsaxis* to *Snuneymuxw* in September of 2018 just as your second sibling *xus wakwa San'yas* was born. In 2019 I simultaneously began my doctoral program in Indigenous language revitalization through the University of Victoria and the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) through the First Peoples Cultural Council. Both initiatives were to create space for learning our language of *Kwakwala* and to teach you and your 2 siblings Calai *Mixala* (to dream) and *San'yas* (clever/creative). It has been a profound journey of language learning and inevitable reclamation for me and hopefully you too. I am writing this dedication to you so that you may better understand my intentions, my hopes and provide encouragement to you in your *Bakwamkala* journey.



Figure 104: *Ik k̄ana'lida tsep* (beautiful is the dance apron).
Dhu'li'gas Mayumi wearing her replica *tsep* made for her *Gaxalilitso lax Tayagu'ł*.
Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2018

Tsepila

(dance apron creation)

The *tsep* that has been created for you is a replica of *x̄an gagas'wale* (my grandmother-passed) Emily (Scow) Willie's *tsep*. *Ma'ł* (2) other replica *tsep* have been made by *x̄an 'nula Wadzidalaga*, Midori Nicolson for *x̄an's dli'dhu'li'gas* Juliana and Mayumi. Emily (Scow) Willie was your *Hilus* (great-grandmother), and I believe she made the apron about the same age as you are now. *Hilus* Emily was a seamstress and sewed clothing for herself and her family. She birthed 16 children including *x̄us Ada* Emily (your grandmother, my mother) and passed on after birthing *Ada* Emily. *Hilus* Emily was *Musgamakw Dzawada'enukw/Kwickwasutaineuk* and *Kwaku'ł* and was married to your *Hilus Gagamp'wale* Charles Willie who was *Musgamakw Dzawada'enuxw/Kwickwasutaineuk* through an arranged marriage. They lived in *Uk'wanalis* while raising their children.



Figure 105: *Ğaxw'ida's ƣa tsep* (hang the dance apron).
Tsep created for *ƣan galma'yudlqmi E. Na'yi* as part of dissertation and a replica of *ƣan gagas 'wale tsep*.
Katq'makwinuƣw - Yola, 2024

I did not know this prior to my doctoral start but xus *Hi'hilus* Emily and Charles had both attended residential school. All their children including xus *Ada* Emily were also taken into this system and attended St. Mikes *lax 'Yalis*. So, the language loss in our family began with your *hi'hilus* (great grandparents) who began using english with their children as they were influenced to believe it was the better language for their family. My understanding is they spoke *Kwak'wala* to each other but english to their children. It also seems that this shift in language use from *Kwak'wala* to english would have transitioned from the eldest to the youngest children. As the older ones became fluent speakers of our *Bak'wamkala*, the middle children understand but do not speak the language and the youngest ones (including xus *Ada* Emily) do not seem to understand or speak much of our language. This is our family history of language loss and use of our *Bak'wamkala*. Our language loss began with xus *Hi'hilus* (great-grandparents) and then xus *Ada* (grandmother) Emily was not raised with her language, and then neither was I. It is a similar history with xus *Ump*'s side. So, it is profound that you Emaeya *Na'yi* (fallen snow) are being raised with your ancestral language. You are the first generation after 2 generations to be raised with *Kwak'wala* in the home. I hope you can see that this is a very big deal.



Figure 106: *Tsepi'sgla* (wearing an apron).
Nugwa'gm Yola wearing *tsep* created as part of dissertation for *xan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Yola, 2024

Olakalan tlamka'an tlus

(really proud I am of you)!

I am very proud of you and grateful for your participation in our *Bakwamkala* projects and programs. I recognize you may have felt like you had no choice (and you didn't), but I appreciate you making the effort to engage and perhaps come out of your comfort zone to take part in the various initiatives.

Here is a list of the *Kwakwala* programming you took part in since our household family began actively and using our language daily starting in 2019.

- North Island College Introductory *Kwakwala* online course, with you, Scarlett and me attending, a weekly evening course over 1 term
- *Wigaxans yakantalape* (let us speak together), a family friendly online program, through the *Kumugwe'* Cultural Society (2-year span)
- Our *Ma'ma'kwayu* (calendar) project (3-year span)
- Podcast (*Nawalakw* healing society)
- *Wigaxans 'Wi'la Kakutlapa* (let us learn together) 6 video series
- Ancestral language reclamation and movement for wellness video

Olikas Na'yi! Gilakas'la!



Figure 107: *Naxw'gnala* (wearing a blanket).
Galma'yudłami E. Na'yi during the *Gaxalilitšo* ceremonial week held for her *łax Dlaksiwe*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Ik

(good)

'yaksam

(bad)

Ala'an

(silly)

Nuyam

(story)

The good, the bad and the silly stories...

Iki da Nuyam – good is the story...

I have such fond memories of the beginnings of our *mamakwayu* (calendar) project. We rented an Airbnb home in Royston (near Courtney, about an hour drive from *Snuneymuxw*) during the time of covid that many referred to as the time of lockdown. Taking inspiration from an established calendar and word of the day *Kwak'wala* project shared over facebook by *Ikawegam*, Lindsay Beans, you and I began to record videos of our *mamakwayu* (day, day of the week, month) and a word of the day and share them over facebook. This was the beginning of a substantial component and profound learning for me personally and I believe for all of us in our home. I absolutely cherish this time I had with you in learning our language together.

'yaksami da Nuyam – bad is the story...

I imagine this journey has not always felt like a good one. I acknowledge that there have been times where I have pushed things or been too rigid in my hopes for us to use more

of our language. *Mayaṯan* (my regrets) for any negative experience you may have had in learning our language on my account, I am just so intent on bringing our ancestral language to life in our home.

Ala'ani da Nuyam - silly is the story...

I found it humorous how you joked about giving your cousin a name while participating in the paddle program with *Akala* out in our *qwi'nagwis*.

“I’ll give you an Indian name...*tipid* (to pull foreskin back)” ... “it means fish!”

Good that you can be playful and joke in our *Bakw̱amḵala x̱an* #1 (*'ṉam*)!



Figure 108: *Ukw̓wasus* (I believe in you).
Anis Glow & dlu'li'gas Julianna standing in front of *Him̓anis* (standing forever) *gukwdzi lax Ukw̓q̓nalis* during her *Gaxalilit̓so. Kat̓q'makwinuxw* - Ingo Spier, 2014

Sinat

(plan or reason)

A'yu'sala

(to understand)

Dl̥ix̥s'ala

(give advice)

Intention, insight and encouragement...

A big part of my desire to write these dedications to each of you is for the opportunity to help you understand my journey in *Kwak'wala* reclamation as it may not always be clear. I have spent a lot of time over the past 6 plus years dedicated to learning, teaching, creating resources and supporting our communities with *Bak'wamkala Kwak'wala* revitalization. Time that may otherwise have been spent with you and your siblings doing things that other families typically do and/or taking you all to extra-curricular or recreational activities. *Mayat̥an* (my regrets) for this but I do believe in the long run it will be to our benefit.



Figure 109: *Dukwala'mase xa hasdaqala'yu* (do you see the breath to live)?
Galma'yudl̥ami E. Na'yi & dlu'li'gas Scarlett during week-long coming-of-age process *lax D̥l̥aksiwe' t̥l̥ama'is*.
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2021

Iksukw

(beautiful)

Waldam

(word)

Beautiful words...

Our language is so beautiful! Learning the deeper meaning of words is just so amazing. Our ancestors were so poetic in how they saw the world.

Examples of words:

K'wala'yu– my reason for living, *Hasdaxalayu* – my reason for breathing...

Tlatlakul, Trish Rosborough spoke to this in her work. You may not remember *Tlatlakul* but she was one of our first *Kwakwala* teachers. She is the one who brought me into this Indigenous Language Revitalization program kicking off my highly active language learning journey. She was your peer Dusty's *gagas* and Robin Rosborough's *abamp*. Although her passing coincided with the start of my doctoral studies, she has had a huge influence on my PhD process and *Kwakwala* journey.

Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesanuxw Kwakwala

(we want Kwakwala to live)

This is a phrase I learned early on in my doctoral journey, and it came from *Hqwetlagwila* Isabel (Robertson) Seward (one of my *Kwakwala* Mentor's/your friend Kiaralee's *Ada*). This is a driving force in my efforts to learn, help others learn and increase our *Bakwamkala* use in our household.

Kwakwala, as I shared with you and Scarlett, is an endangered language with only 2% of our population still fluent. The 2% that is still fluent is Elderly and most will make their journey to the spirit realm in near future. We currently have no children fluent in our language. For a language to be considered healthy, the children need to be speaking.

I remember when I shared this information with you and Scarlett. It was after a *Kwakwala* video project where I felt you both were disinterested in the summer of 2022. You would have been 11 and Scarlett 12. I felt the need to talk to you about the importance of the work we are doing and thought it might be a good time to share about the status of our language.

I remember your eyes became very big and Scarlett's jaw dropping. This information sharing seemed to have a big impact. I hope that the sharing of these statistics helped you both to know the seriousness of the work we are doing. I hope it helped you to realize that you are a part of something big! You are helping to keep our language going!

It also made me realize that perhaps we need to have more of this dialogue with our youth. The sharing of Indigenous language stats can be daunting, but perhaps if done in a good way it can help our youth to engage in this important work.



Figure 110: *Tsepisgla'mida tsqak* (the woman is wearing an apron).
Galma'yudlqmi E. Na'yi wearing the *tsep* created for her as part of my dissertation *lax Tayagut tlqma'is*.
KiKatq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Nawalakw

(supernatural)

Łaxwala

(a loved one, to love someone)

Our language of *Kwakwala* is a loved one...

What if our language of *Kwakwala* was a loved one? A loved one full of knowledge, wisdom, great ideas and ways of being in this world... a loved one with not much energy left for life who could really use our help in staying earthside to pass on all that good knowledge, wisdom and healing properties to us... wouldn't you do all that you could to give life back to that loved one? Our language is just that, a supernatural loved one who has the capacity to heal us, to restore us if we can give our loved one our good energy to remain with us.

Kwala'galit

(to come to life)

***Bakwamkala* keeps me earthside**

Losing *xan wakwa* in October of 2023 was the most painful experience of my lifetime. *xan wakwa*, *xus Kwali'* was an amazing being and I loved him tremendously. He struggled with his addictions and despite his best efforts to overcome them, he died by a drug overdose.

I came to realize that my *Bakwamkala* work is my addiction and keeps me going. It gives me purpose and helps me to carry on through the tough times. I am so grateful for my *Kwakwala* journey for keeping me on a good path, one that keeps me grounded and earthside.

In the time immediately following *Kwali'* Dennis' funeral I felt a tremendous amount of grief and heaviness. The beautiful words or terms I mentioned earlier *Kwala'yu* and

Hasdaxala'yu came to have a much deeper and more meaningful meaning. I realized that it was *xan sasqm*, you and your siblings that kept me going... you were my reasons for living and breathing. If I had not been responsible for your care, and needing to feed you all and make sure you were okay, I likely would have become severely depressed and one with my bed.

I will always love *xan wak'wa*, *xus kwali'*, and carry him with me in my *noke'* (heart and mind) but know I need to *hanata* (keep on keeping on). I will continue to do this big work of reclaiming *xan's Bakwamkala* as it helps to restore us to a more balanced state of being. It helps me to be more in balance so that I can be a better parent to you and your siblings. I also hope that it helps others to heal and take care of themselves and others in better ways too.

Ola ikan noke' gaxakus xan galma'yudtami E. Na'yi

(really happy is my heart & mind that you have come to me my first-born E. fallen snow)

Ttumasaj ukwasus

(really I believe in you)

'Walasan mu'lan ttus xan #Nam (1)

(big gratitude I have for you my #One)

Hayulisan taxwalanukwttus

(always love I have for you)



Figure 111: *K'wisux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today!)
Galma'yudlami E. Na'yi in a snowfall *lax Gwa'dzi'*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas

He'man nakagawe ma'yudłami Miḡala
(my middle born - to dream)



Figure 112: *Ikaṇ noḡe' kas* (you make my heart/mind happy).
Nakagawe ma'yudłami C. Miḡala lax Tayagul atli.
Katg'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

K'wala'yu, K'wala'yu*

(you are my reason for living)

Łaxwala'nukwaṅtłus, Łaxwala'nukwaṅtłus

Ah ya ha, Ah ya'a ha

Ikaṇ noḡe'x kas, Ikaṇ noḡe'x kas

Su'me'e gan hasdaxala'yu, hasdaxala'yu

Ah ya ha, Ah ya'a ha

Loved one/reason for living, Loved one/reason for living

Love I have for you, Love I have for you

Ah ya ha, Ah ya'a ha

I am happy for you/my make my heart/mind happy, I am happy for you/you

make my heart/mind happy

You are the one I bring forth/my reason for breathing, You are the one I

bring forth/my reason for breathing

Ah ya ha, Ah ya'a ha

Gayutł - Mayanił (Diana Matilpi)



Figure 115: *Takwala* (heartbeat, pulse), *Kwixala* (drumming).

The beat of the drum is like our heartbeat. The sound we hear and pulse we feel in our mother's womb. Thus, drumming has regulating benefits and if paired with singing in our ancestral languages it is highly restorative. C. *Mixala* joined me this day singing & drumming *lax Dłakšiwē'* to express gratitude and request permission for being featured in my dissertation. *Katq'makwinuxw* - Yola, 2025

Gilakas'la Calai Mixgala, x̣an #2 (ma'l),

K'wala'yu (my reason for living)! I have so much admiration for the joy you find in day-to-day life and the beautiful energy you bring to our family.

I am writing this dedication to you to accompany the *tsep* (dance apron) I have beaded for you as part of my dissertation outputs for my doctoral research.

In this dedication to you I will share your birth and naming story, our *Kwak'wala* journey (mine and yours) including the good, the bad and the silly, speak to the family history of the dance apron as related to our language reclamation journey and my hopes for you and your future journey with *x̣an's Bak'wamkala* (our language/our sound).



Figure 116: *Laxwq̣la'nukẉnthus* (love I have for you).

Nugwa'am Yola dlu'ẉn naḡagawe ma'yudḷami C. Mixgala wearing our *yayaḡwṣgm* (chilkat) *laḡ Ḍlaksiwe'*.
Kaṭ'makwinuḡw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Ma'yudlam

(to be born)

Dligam

(name)

Nuyam

(story)

Your birth and naming story...

You were born on August 7, 2016, *laxa T'samas* (Victoria) but while we were living just outside of *Tsaxis*. You came into this world fast and furious almost born in the hospital toilet and weighed nearly 9 pounds! We spent a solid amount of time in the hospital following your arrival as you came down with a fever right after birth and had to spend time in the NICU. We were also in the pediatric ward for a length of time because you had high levels of jaundice. It was over a month before we returned home to *Tsaxis*.

You are named Calai after *xus Gagamp* (your Papa Cal, *xus Ump's Ump*). Your middle name is *Mixala* (to dream) as I wanted you to have a *Kwakwala* middle name like me and you know that mine is Yola (wind). You also received a *Nuu-chah-nulth* name at your *Hihugwila* (10 moons naming) *Wuu-nuu-alnik* (the aura of her spirit is strong) which came through *xus Gagamp's Mowachut* side. Your *Hihugwila* took place on July 1st, 2017 *lax Dlakiwe*, on the ancestral lands of the *Kwagut* and *Kwakwala* language, at the same time as *xus 'nula Liana's Gaxalilitso* (coming-of-age) ceremony.



Figure 117: *Wila'am awilaxwida ganganangm* (every child matters)! *Gayutl - Helagalis'wgle'* Spruce Wamiss.
Anis Kat holding *C. Mixq̄la dlu'wi* Liana and Scarlett next to her and the top of *E. Na'yi's* head showing.
Katq'makw taken at *Hihugwila k̄a'e C. Mixq̄la & Gaxalilitso k̄a'e Liana lax Dłaksiwe.*
Kikatq'makw'inukw - Gugwelsm ne'ex, Katherine Strachan, 2017.



Figure 118: *Wa'wasdamtlan kwálat, sux'se'amtlan Wá'yugwámatal* (as long as I am living, my baby you'll be).
Nugwa'am Yola dlu'wán nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Míxala wearing our *yayaḡwsám* (chilkat) *lax Dlaksiwe' t̓lqma'is*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2016

Ikida 'wi'la'mola

(it is good to travel together)

Our *Bakwamkala* journey...

In your first year of life, I was able to attend a language nest held at the Sacred Wolf Friendship Centre *lax Gwa'dzi'*, a 12-minute drive from where we were living. I attended this program with you 3 or 4 times a week for a few hours each day and we were able to spend time with several first language *Kwakwala* speakers including *xus Gagamp's* older sister Middy. I appreciated this program as it gave me some grounding during a challenging time for our family.

I was experiencing a great deal of post-partum distress, and *xus Ump* was struggling with his sobriety. It was good for you and I to attend and have opportunity to learn our language with our Elder speakers and to be fed. *xus 'nula Emaeya Na'yi* attended *Wagalus* school in *Tsaxis* while you and I went to the language nest.

Once I returned to work after taking my 1-year maternity leave with you I was grateful the language nest we had been attending moved into the daycare you went to in *Tsaxis*. Our Elder speakers attended the *Kwigwis* daycare for a part of the day some days of the week bringing our *Kwakwala* language into the space. So, you were able to receive exposure to *xan's Bakwamkala* right from infancy for the first two years of your life!

In 2018 our family moved from *Tsaxis* to *Snuneymuxw* for *xus Ump* to go back to school just as *xus wakwa San'yas* was born. In 2019 I also went back to school to pursue this PhD in Indigenous language revitalization at the University of Victoria. I began this doctoral journey simultaneously with the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) with funding from the First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC).

This was a pivotal time for our family as I became highly active in *Kwakwala* learning and revitalization work. I began to use our language with you and your siblings in our home daily. After *xus 'nula Emaeya* was born (almost 6 years before you) I began attending a weekly community *Kwakwala* class while living *lax T'samas* (Victoria). We moved to *Tsaxis* when *Emaeya Na'yi* was nearly 3 and carried on attending any *Kwakwala* programs available. My learning was just becoming active during this time and most of the programs were weekly, and I was not necessarily bringing that language learning into our home.

After you were born and we attended the language nest together my learning became more active, I attended all *Kwakwala* programs I could, increasing from weekly to a few days a week, but was still not using much of our *Bakwamkala* language in our home.

Following *San'yas*' birth and beginning my simultaneous doctoral and MAP programs I became highly active and began using our *Kwakwala* language within the home daily.

I am grateful that you Calai *Mixala* had opportunity to spend time with our *Ni'noxola* (wise ones) Elder speakers in your first two years of life and then have had exposure to our language within the home from 3 years on till now, with only a small gap in between where you would not have received much *Kwakwala* input.



Figure 119: *Ḡagisama* (jellyfish)!

Nakagawe ma'yudłami C. Miḡalḡ wearing her custom made *gagisama k̄as'ane'* at the Copper Maker gallery *laḡ Tsaxis. Katḡ'makwinuḡw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Our time in *Snuneymuxw* was an incredible time for us in our *Kwakwala* learning and my launch into revitalization work. I had the opportunity to learn from a variety of *Noḡsola* who you also were able to spend time with, and they were additional *Ada's* for you.

I felt called to return to our homelands for our household to have the opportunity to connect with our ancestral homelands, communities, language and cultural practices. We moved from *Snuneymuxw* to *Gwa'dzi'* (Port Hardy) in 2022 for you and *Sgn'yas* especially to have this opportunity.

In deciding where you both would go to school, we opted to have you attend the *Gwa'sala 'Nak'waxda'xw* community school *lax Ts'algwadi* as it is close to our house and the *Bak'wamkala* teacher is an enthusiastic learner and teacher of our language. I also wanted *Sgn'yas* to attend *Anis Tomiko's* emerging immersion preschool program there and you decided you wanted to go to the school where *Anis* was and be close to *Sgn'yas*.

You have amazed me with your ability to speak, think, wonder, create words in our ancestral language! I am so grateful for your keenness to learn and participate in our various learning projects and initiatives.



Figure 120: *Nogad* (wise, having wisdom).

C. *Mix'ala* joined me this day *laxa Gwa'dzi'* estuary in singing and drumming to the words-of-wisdom shown here *gayutl Gigame Namugwis'wale'*, George Hunt Sr., a close relative of *xgn sasom* who has recently passed on.
Katq'makwinuxw - Yola, 2025

It touched my heart the time you shared with me that you would like to be a *Kwak'wala* teacher like me when you grow up. It didn't really occur to me that I was a teacher, but you reassured me "you teach on the laptop, and you teach us."

I appreciate how you have openly shared your language knowledge with others. You are already very much a teacher of our *Bak'wam'kala* in your young age (currently 9).

One time you said to me "It's weird when you speak english to *San'yas*, because you usually speak *Kwak'wala* to him" and this had such an impact on me. I tried my best to speak

solely in our language to your brother but couldn't keep up and shifted to using both languages around the summer of 2023 just as he turned 5 and you turned 7.

This journey of learning *Kwakwala* which shifted to a path of reclamation has had its challenges, but I am reassured when I hear you speaking in our *Bakwamkala* on your own accord. *Gilakas'la* for this as it encourages me to carry on.

It was incredibly encouraging during your interview at the age of *adlabu* (7) to hear you describe our language as “a gift, a very special gift” and to share such a positive outlook on your experience of it. *Ikan noke' kas* (you make my heart & mind happy).

My hope is you will continue to learn, use and love our language the way that you do now. I hope that you will continue to teach others and pass our language on to your children, my future grandchildren.

Our family has been without our ancestral language for two generations. You and your siblings are the first generation since your great-grandparents to be raised with your language. I do hope that it will be possible in near future for our *Kwakwaka'wakw* children to be raised “in our language” but that doesn't seem feasible currently, at least not for our circumstances. But I do feel a huge sense of accomplishment in raising you and your siblings “with our language.”



Figure 121: *K'wax'id* (to wink)!

C. *Mixala* winking at the camera with E. *Na'yi, dlu'li'gas* Scarlett, myself & *Sgn'yas* behind her at the Copper Maker gallery *lax Tsaxis. Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Ik

(good)

'yaksam

(bad)

Ala'an

(silly)

Nuyam

(story)

The good, the bad and silly stories...

Iki da Nuyam – good is the story...

“Call me *Mixgla*, it means “to dream” but don’t call me “to dream” call me *Mixgla*” *xus Bakwamkala kakutla'mas* shared this with me in our interview, that you had said this in her class. It warms my heart – *ikqn noke'* – that you can share confidently of your *Kwakwala* middle name and its meaning amongst peers.

Xus Bakwamkala kakutla'mas also shared that you can create sentences from words, are a leader in team games, love to sing songs and are familiar with *Bakwamkala* books (and do not request the translations in english as some of your peers do). All good things to hear my girl!

'Yaksami da Nuyam – bad is the story...

I can’t recall any “bad” experiences of our language learning journey but do know there have been times where I have been rigid and may have caused you stress. *Mayatqn* (regretful I am) if this ever was the case. I have just been so intent on having us learn and speak in our language but realize now it needs to be positive and a more natural way.

I remember a time we were videoing an immersion set with you *dhu'wus 'nula* and you were not keen. You were making faces and your body language indicated you weren't

into it and then you loudly proclaimed, “this is boring!” It is a humorous video to reflect on. You would have just been 3 years old.

Ala'ani da Nuyam - silly is the story...

“The aliens live on the moon” - One time I was again video-ing and attempting to capture some language learning with the orange moon (an exciting new stimulus) and you wouldn't stop talking about the aliens who live on the moon! I attempted 4 or 5 times to elicit *Kwakwala* regarding the orange moon, but you continued to tell me stories in english about the aliens who live on the moon. You had the sweetest voice for storytelling and still do.

Tsepila

(dance apron creation)



Figure 122: *Nawila* (telling stories of our ancestors).

Tsep previously sewn and designed by family but beading completed by myself for C. *Mixgla* as part of dissertation.
Katq'makwinuxw - Yola, 2024

As I was working on the *tsep* for *xus 'nula* (your older sister), a replica of my maternal grandmother's dance apron, you were curious about what I was doing and when I told you, you said "I would like an apron too" and so I decided to finish this *tsep* for you. This *tsep* came to me

after *xan Ump* had passed on. It was likely made by him or *xan Gagas'wale'* (my gran-passed, his mother) and assume it was designed by him. I have just completed the beading portion now

for you *xan #2 (ma't)*.

Xan Ump who raised me was a cultural revivalist and worked hard to bring songs, dances, and ceremonial practices back to his *Haitzaqv* community. He worked closely with his mother in creating ceremonial regalia such as *k'angextola* (button blankets) and *tsep* (aprons). There is a

segment on both and their work in Robes of Power.

Gagas'wale' Lillian was a *Haitzaqv* speaker and supported early revitalization efforts in the Bella

Bella community. I have her certificate that she received from UVic in 1979 as a Native

Language teacher.

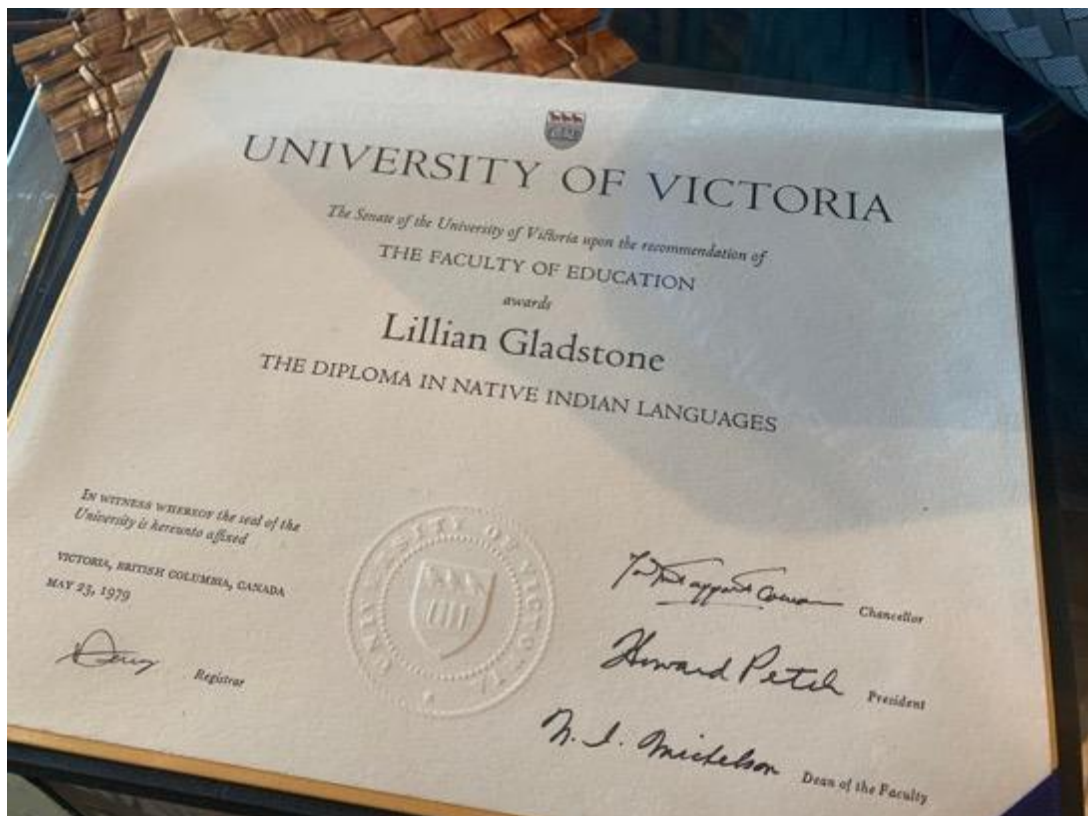


Figure 123: *Kas'idq'asa san's Galga'lis* (the path of our ancestors).

Gagas'wale' *Qvuduyua'ti*, Lillian (Humchitt) Gladstone's diploma in "Native Indian" languages from the University of Victoria in 1979. *Gagas'wale'* was involved in early *Haitzaqvala* revitalization efforts in *Wag'lisla*.

Kikatq'makw'inukw - Yola, 2022

It was shared during the opening of the *Hailzaqv* bighouse that our *Gagas'wqle'* Lillian was instrumental in creating the first writing system used for the *Hailzaqv* language but was not acknowledged for this work with a linguist taking the credit.

As a child I witnessed *xan Ump'wqle'* and *Gagas'wqle'* working together in unison towards *Hailzaqv* language and culture revitalization. I had no idea *xan Ump'wqle'* had gone into the child welfare system and not grown up solely in his mother's care.

A testament to strength and resilience, the ability of *xan Ump'wqle'* to reconnect *dlu'wis Abamp* (*Abukw* in *Haitzaqv*) and help bring back *Hailzaqv* ways of being to strengthen his people.



Figure 124: *Dqntsqm* (cedar bark hat)!
C. *Mixala* wearing the *tsep*, created for her as part of my dissertation, and a *dqntsqm lax Tayagul atli*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

So, this *tsep* I have completed for you, C. *Mixqala*, is a reminder of how strong and resilient we are and the importance of our revitalization work. Our languages, our songs, our dances, our ceremonies and our own ways of being are necessary to help us live our best lives.

When you dance with this *tsep* I want you to remember that it was started long before you were born by *xan Ump'wale'* and *Gagas'wale'* who worked together in the revitalization of *Haitzaqv* culture and language. I have now completed the beading portion for you as part of our journey to reclaim our *Bakwamkala* within our household.

Our languages hold our ancestral worldviews; they each contain a unique knowledge system that connects us to our lands and waters and carry the teachings we need to be in this world in a good way.

I'xdalkwala – to carry a good heart... you do this so beautifully *xan* #2 (*ma't*)!



Figure 125: *Gayutlan laxa atli* (I come from the forest).
Nakagawe' ma'yudlami C. Mixala wearing the *tsep* beaded for her as part of my dissertation *lax Tayagul atli*.
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Nothing has helped me to heal from intergenerational trauma the way that reclaiming our ancestral language has. I hope you come to know and understand this and can carry this on in a way that best fits for you.

I can see the confidence that you have in your *Kwak'wala Bak'wamkala* use and how freely you are able to speak with what you know. I have so much appreciation for how you often speak in our language without prompting when you know the words.

Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesanukw Kwak'wala – we want *Kwak'wala* to live!

I have no doubt that our language lives and thrives in you and that you will carry on giving life to our ancestral language.

Gilakas'la Calai Mixala for being a part of this journey with me. I couldn't do this without you!



Figure 126: *Ikan noke' legan's kakutla xan's Gwayi'le'las*
 (my heart and mind feel good we are learning our ways of being).
Nugwa'am Yola and C. Mixala lax Dłaxsiwe' after singing and drumming to the *gwi'nagwis*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Yola, 2025

'walasq̄n ikaṅ noke' gaṅaḱus C. Mixala

(really happy is my heart & mind that you have come to me C. to dream)

Xanyasq̄n thus

(amazed I am by you)

Wawalkinalan lot

(received a gift I have in you)

Wi'xusto gaṅaḱ kas

(you lift up me up)



Figure 127: *Kwisux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today)!
Naḡagawe' ma'yudlami C. Miḡala in a snowfall *lax Gwa'dzi'*.
Katḡ'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2022

He'man Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas
(my last born clever)



Figure 128: *Su'am ixk'a'mas xan noke' la'e anudzuli is ida iki*
(you make my heart/mind happy when the sky is cloudy grey).
Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas holding his *hamsaml lax Tayagul atli*.
Katg'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Su'man T'isala, Su'man T'isala *

(you are my sunshine)

Su'am ixk'a'mas xan noke'

La'e anudzuli is ida iki

Kisas kottala xan laxwala ina 'yus

Gwala dax'id xan t'isala

Gayut# - Julia Nelson



Figure 129: *Luxwam* (round face).
Alxste' ma'yudłami San'yas as a newborn. *Luxwam* was considered in his naming.
Katq'makwinuxw - K. Photography, 2018.

You are my sunshine, You are my sunshine

You make me happy

When skies are grey

You don't know how much I love you

Don't take my sunshine away

Gilakas'la San'yas, *xan* #3 (*yudaxw*), *xan babagwam* (boy) and *alxste'* (last) child...

In this dedication I will share with you your birth and naming story, our language learning journey (yours and mine) including the good, the bad and the silly, speak to the ceremonial piece

I had created for you and how it fits with our household reclamation of *Kwak'wala*, our *Bak'wamk'ala*, and my hopes for you to continue to learn and speak in our ancestral language.

Ma'yudłam

(to be born)

Dligam

(name)

Nuyam

(story)

Your birth and naming story...

You were not officially named *San'yas* until you were 2 months old. We sort of assumed you would be another girl; we did not find out your gender prior to your birth as we had done *dlu'wus wi'wak'wa*. You surprised us in your arrival as a *babagwam* (boy) and we were happy you did! In comparison *dlu'wus wi'wak'wa* E. *Na'yi* & C. *Mixala* your birth was a breeze! You were born *laxa Tsamas* (Victoria) same as *xus wi'wak'wa* at the Victoria General Hospital but we were only at the hospital for a few hours before returning to our airbnb to *xus wi'wak'wa* and *Ada* Emily.



Figure 130: *'makq̄nibil* (swaddled, wrapped tight in a blanket).
Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas as a newborn. *Katq'makwinuxw* - K. Photography, 2018

I found the word *San'yas* on the first voices website just as I had found *xus wi'wak̄wa* middle *Kwak̄wala* names. But when I checked with our *Ni'nox̄sola* (wise ones), our first language

Kwak'wala speakers, the handful we asked had not heard of *San'yas*. 'nula Marianne, *xus Anis* did find the word in a dictionary which was helpful, but I wanted confirmation from a first language speaker. Finally, *Anis* Sara (*xus Ump*'s first cousin) was given confirmation from Julia Nelson, an elder *Kwak'wala* speaker *lax Tsaxis*. I was grateful for this confirmation, and we announced your name on facebook as soon as we received it as some family members had expressed concern that you remained nameless for so long (2 months if I remember correctly).

The meaning of *San'yas* listed on the first voices website is “knowledgeable”, but other sources have put forward inventor, creative and insightful. We opted to go with clever although we know the other interpretations are good ones too and all could be possible depending on the context when using this term. *San'yas* our clever *babagwam*! You are also very much an inventor and creative!

You came into this earth realm on September 25, 2018, rather quickly and smoothly in comparison with *xus wi'wak'wa*. You had such a cute round face and big round blue eyes! I do believe I considered naming you *luxwam* (round face). *Osam* (resembles father) and sounds like awesome was another possibility *xus Ump* was keen on but maybe a good thing we didn't go with that as you have grown to look more like me, *xus Abamp*.



Figure 131: *Hilalalisan's 'nalax, galgapolaxan's sasam, tsuxwtlqama, hi'lukwine' dlu'wida is ma'yutlami* (fix the world, work together for our children, grandchildren and those yet to be born), *Gayutl - Gigame 'Namugwis'wale, George Hunt Sr.*
Sgan'yas being held *dlu'wis Ump* towards *'Namugwis'wale* at his *Hilugwila lax Tsaxis* with Ross Hunt Sr. in the background, *Kikatq'makw'inukw* - Desiree Hunt, 2019

Hilugwila (the right time), 10 moons ceremony - Your *hilugwila* took place in the backyard of *xus ga'agamp Ada Marie & Gagamp Cal's* backyard *lax Tsaxis* on August 4, 2019. You received the name *Yakilagit* from *xus Gagamp (xus Ump's Ump)* who had received it as a young boy (4/5 years old) from Mungo Martin and *Abaya*. *Yakilagit* (spelling from Mike Willie, *xan wakwa*) can be interpreted as reason for making things with reference to potlatch property (Marianne Nicolson, *xan 'nula*) and/or people are always making him things (Marion Hunt-Doig, *xus Gagamp's* sister). It was a beautiful day with family celebrating and acknowledging you!



Figure 132: *Tlatqmalux da babgwamx* (wearing a hat is the young boy).
Alxste' ma'yudlami Sqn'yas holding a puppet at the playhouse *lax Tsaxis*.
Kata'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas

Ikida 'wi'la'mola

(it's good to travel together)

Our Bak'wamk'ala journey...

You were born just as we had just moved from *Tsaxis* to *Snuneymuxw* for *xus Ump* to go back to school at VIU. That following summer of 2019 I began my simultaneous doctoral journey in Indigenous language revitalization at the University of Victoria and the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) with the First Peoples Cultural Council (FPCC). So, from 10 months old you have been a part of this profound chapter in my life, in our lives, in learning, reclaiming and revitalizing our ancestral language of *Kwak'wala*, our *Bak'wamk'ala*.

It was an intense time during your early years while we lived in *Snuneymuxw*. I completed the course work for my doctoral program and the three-year MAP with 900 hours of *Kwakwala* learning each year. The covid pandemic began in March of 2020, and our livelihood was drastically impacted for a couple years. Despite the interruption of covid, we as a household family did well in managing through and carrying on in our language learning efforts.

In 2022 we moved from *Snuneymuxw* to *Gwa'dzi'* (Port Hardy), the ancestral lands of our *Kwagu't* people and our *Kwakwala* language. My hope for you and Calai *Mixgla* was for you both to have opportunity to meaningfully connect with our homelands, communities, families, language and cultural practices. This was similar when we moved from *Tsamas* (Victoria) to *Tsaxis* (Fort Rupert) when *xus 'nula* (your older sister) Emaeya *Na'yi* was small. I wanted you to attend an emerging immersion program with *dhu'wus Anis* Tomiko at the *Gwa'sqala-Nakwaxda'xw* school in *Tsalgwadi* and that is where you went. Calai *Mixgla* opted to attend the same school so she could be close to you and near *Anis* too.

It was a relief for me to have all three of you attend schools where you were learning language.

While living in *Snuneymuxw* I felt the pressure of being the only one teaching you our *Bakwamkala*. Although not yet immersive, it helps to know you all have received language learning during your days while at school and then also receive it at home in the afternoons, evenings and weekends. This reinforces the importance, normalization and use of our language for you in your day-to-day life. It has also given me some reprieve or lightened my load so I can focus more on my own needs and/or other components of my revitalization work.

Hinuma

(do something on purpose)

***Hamsamala* mask – a symbol of my commitment...**

While in diapers you took a strong interest in our *Hamsamala* masked dance as many of our *Bibabagwam* do. We found videos on youtube, and you enjoyed watching them repeatedly, copying the movements and making the sounds. This was a significant part of your day during the restricted time of the covid pandemic when we were mostly housebound. For your 4th birthday you were gifted with your very own *Hamsamala* mask which for me was and is a symbol of my commitment to you in continuing to learn and support your *Kwakwala* learning.



Figure 133: *'Wi'stuwux?* (what color is it)? *L̓an̓xa, ts̓ula, t̓lak̓wa d̓lu' m̓ala* (green, black, copper/red & white). *H̓ams̓aml* mask commissioned for *S̓an'yas* as part of my dissertation from Skyler Puglas. *K̓at̓q'makwinux̓w - Yola, 2024*

At some point during the intensive time of learning I decided that you would be the focal point of my learning/speaking. This came from the sharing of a *Nuu-chah-nulth* family featured in a *Voices on the Rise* (Hurtle, 2016) featuring Indigenous language revitalization efforts along the island (vancouver island). In hindsight I believe this was naturally occurring but hearing the father put forward their youngest was the focal point for their family learning I recognized this would be a good focus for myself and our household. Following this I began to make a conscious effort to stay in our language with you as much as possible giving myself more flexibility

d̓lu'wus wi'wak̓wa.



Figure 134: *Hámkwás* (crouched on the ground).
Sán'yas wearing his *hámqaml lax Tayagut atli*.
Katá'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

It was a bittersweet shift when I realized I could no longer keep up with your *Kwakwala* needs. I did not and still do not have the ability to explain certain things in detail, as well as you need them to be, in our *Bakwamkala*. You need to understand what our plans are, why things are happening as they are, and need bigger explanations than I can give in our language. I must use english to provide you with the reassurance and understandings you need. I still use what *Kwakwala* I can as much as I can. I can use our *Bakwamkala* with day-to-day routines, things that are regular but not so much with things that are irregular or unfamiliar. I speak to you in our *Bakwamkala* as much as possible and you understand me and respond but usually in english.

Once you have responded (most often in english) I will request that you say it in our *Bakwamkala* if I know that you know it in our language and then you do.

The *hamsamala* mask is a physical representation of my commitment to continue to learn and use as much *Kwakwala* with you as possible and in doing so the rest of our household benefits and learns too.



Figure 135: *Ka'ltse* (carrying a baby in your arms).
San'yas being held by *xis Ump* with canoe shed in the background *lax Tsaxis*.
Katq'makwinuxw - Thi'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

Ik

(good)

'yaksam

(bad)

ała'an

(silly)

Nuyam

(story)

The good, the bad & the silly stories...

Iki da Nuyam – good is the story...

Many of your first words were in our ancestral language of *Kwak'wala*. I remember attending an online class where a photo of a canoe was shown and you blurted out “*xwak'wana!*” (our word for canoe). It was so exciting that you had learned and spoke this word first in our language!

“*Mysux*” (Mine/*Nusux*), I believe it was you who blended the *Kwak'wala* word *nusux* (mine) with the english word mine just as you were beginning to speak...super cute!

“It’s weird when you speak english to *Sgn'yas*, ‘cause you usually speak *Kwak'wala* to him,” *Gayutl* - *Calai Mixqala*, a neat observation shared by *xus wak'wa* providing me with some reassurance in my efforts to speak as much of our language as possible with you.

'yaksami da Nuyam – bad is the story...

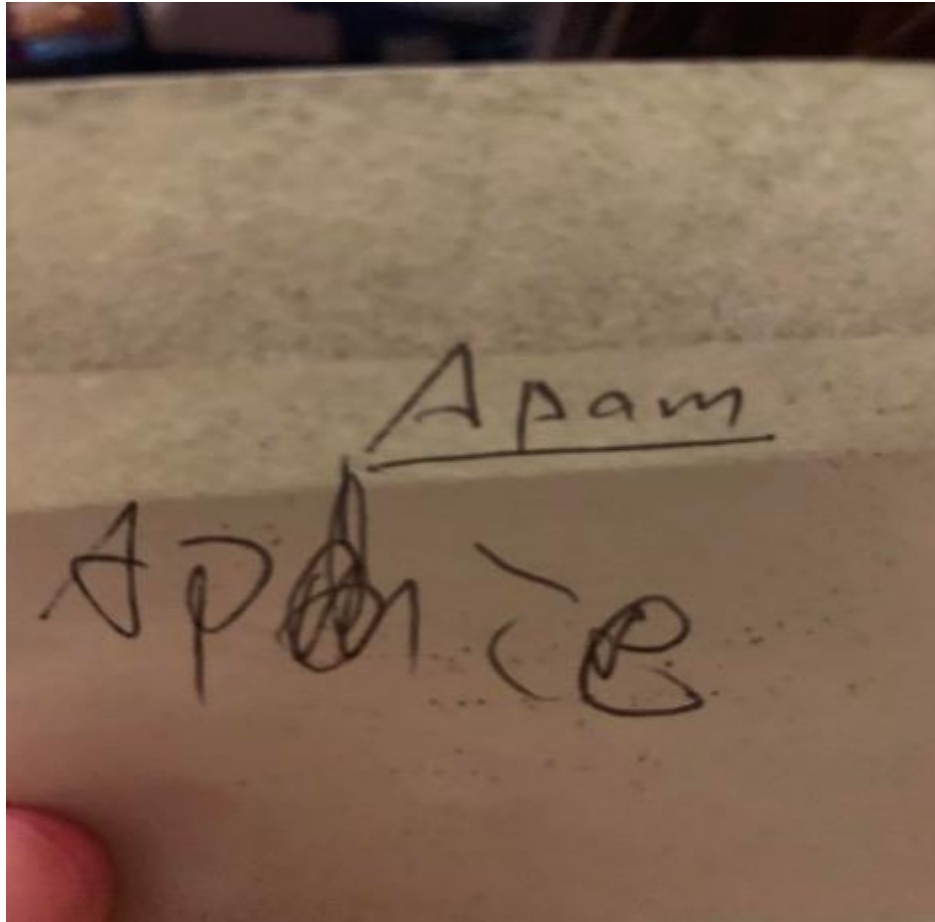


Figure 136: *Abamp* (mom).

The post-it note customer service used when asking *San'yas* what his mom's name was when he was lost at the mall. *Kikatq'makw'inukw* - Yola, 2023.

During spring break in 2023 when you were 4 years old, we lost you at Woodgrove Mall *laxa Snuneymuxw*. It was an incredibly busy time at the mall and scary not finding you for quite some time. Eventually we located you and I met you at Customer Services. I embraced you and comforted you in our *Bak'wamk'ala*. The customer service person asked what language I was speaking and shared he had asked you what your mom's name was and it didn't sound like English to him. They gave me the post-it they used to write my name and it said "apam," which is close to *abamp* for mom. Despite this being one of the scariest times in my life I was so happy that you referred to me as *abamp*!

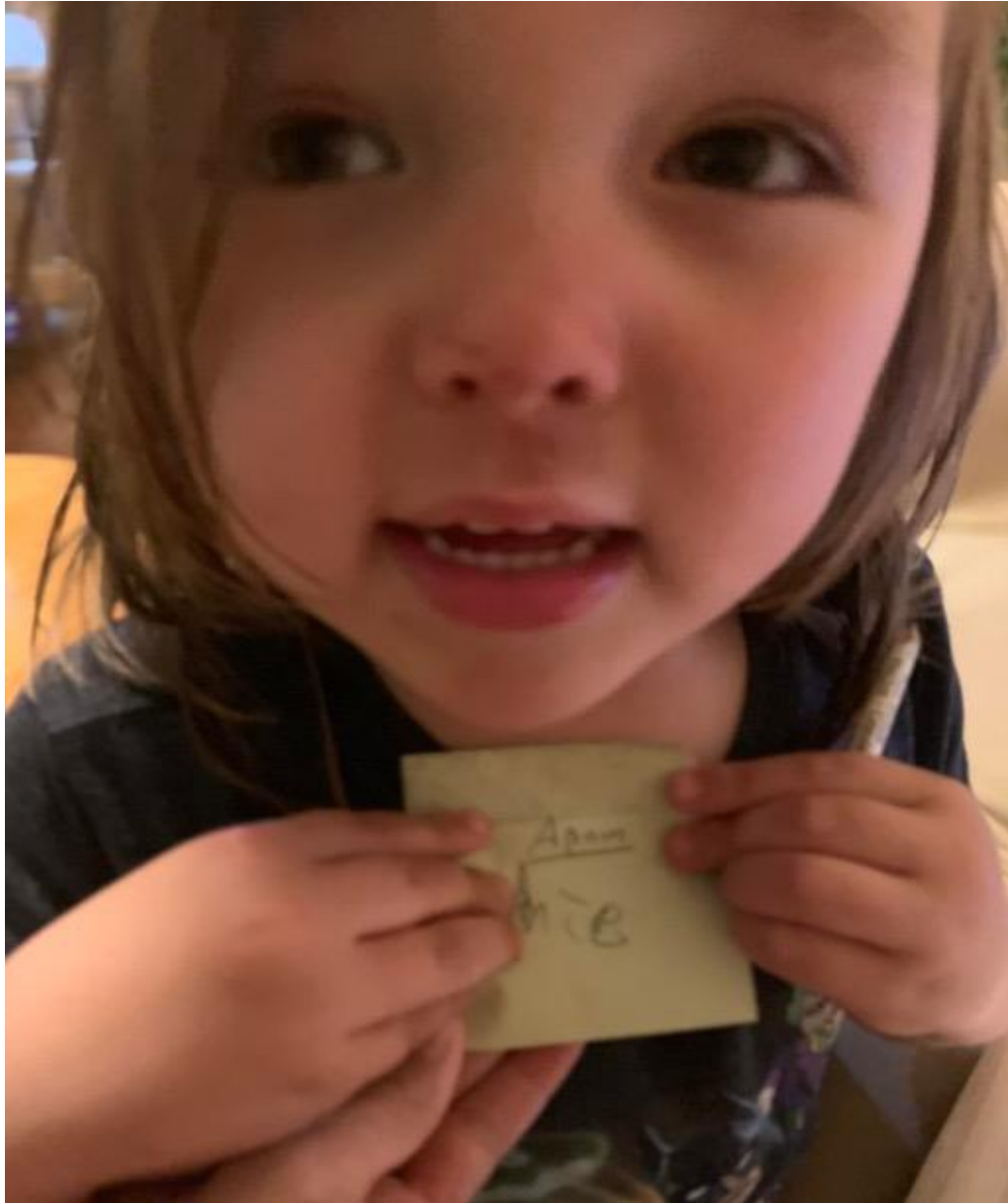


Figure 137: *Xqsa* (lost).

Sgn'yas holding the post-it note with the word “*apam*” written on it by customer service when he was lost at the mall. *Kikatg'makw'inukw* - *Yola*, 2023

It was an exciting time when words began to come from you. Some were english and some were *Kwakwala*. I remember *xus 'nula Emaeya Na'yi* saying to me “Mom he just said a word!” but I wasn't excited for your english words. *Mayatan* (my regrets) for this and any parts of our *Bakwamkala* journey that were not helpful to you. I take full responsibility for any negative impact this may have had on you. It was simply my

greatest hope that you would speak solely in our language but have come to realize that is not a possibility for you and for us at this time.

Ala'ani da Nuyam – silly is the story...

Once you began speaking a lot (mostly in English but some *Kwak'wala*) one of your favorite words was *mangas* (bum)! You seemed to think or know it was funny and used it plenty in various contexts and always with a smile. One time while we were on a *Bak'wamkala* zoom class the teacher Mabel was asking everyone “*Wiksas xwa 'nalax* (how are you today)?” and you responded “*Mangas, Mangas xwa 'nalax*” coining a new phrase “bum today.”

One day you asked me, “do I have a *buwu* (*bulu* – vagina)? does Cayai (Calai) have a *buwu*? does Dad have a *buwu*? Do you have a *buwu*?” A humorous and sweet wondering of body parts and mixing of languages.



Figure 138: *Ƙabikala* (tortoise/turtle)!
Alxste' ma'yudlami Saŋ'yas wearing his custom made *ƙabikala ƙas'ane'* at the *ɩlama'is lax Tsaxis*.
Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2020

'Maƙanibil

(swaddled, wrapped tight in a blanket)

Finding comfort in the language...

It is apparent that you are both comfortable with and find comfort in the use of our language. The evidence for this was brought forward in the interview with *xus Anis Tomiko* (your aunt, but also *xus Ƙakutɩamas* - your teacher) who shared that you are comfortable in the language, and it is obvious hearing our *Bakwamkala* is a natural and

normal experience for you. Our experience of reuniting and comfort with the use of our language after losing each other at the mall also speaks to this.

Dukwala'amtlixak

(he will see that one)

Unique way of seeing the world...

You have a unique way of seeing and being in this world. I have noticed a big difference in you compared to your sisters. Both your teachers *Anis Tomiko*, your preschool teacher and kindergarten teacher have shared this with me. You create art and lego creations and maintain focus on these tasks until complete in a way that fits your flow. You are adamant about completing your creations until you feel you have finished before moving on making class or household transitions challenging for you.

I do not know if our *Bakwamkala* learning journey has added to your uniqueness as it may just be your innate way of being. But I do know that both languages have been a part of you since you were 10 months old. Coincidentally from the time that our people traditionally would acknowledge that an infant was here to stay earthside and hold a *Hilugwila* (the right time) 10 moons ceremony. I do believe that this emerging bilingualism will help to carry you through your lifetime in a different way, a more balanced and holistic experience, a lens that enables you to see the world from two perspectives and is grounded in who we are meant to be as *Bakwam* people.



Figure 139: *Mixuxda Wá'yugwamala* (sleeping is the baby)!
Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas as a newborn. *Katá'makwinuxw* - K. Photography, 2018

Language development – Your development in both languages (*Kwakwala* and english) took some time. I am not sure if this was due to my efforts to raise you in *Kwakwala* as a learner myself, or due to the impacts of covid where many of your caregivers were masked up or if you just needed more time. There was a period where I worried about the slowness and of how it was impacting your well-being.

Socio-emotional needs and safety – In reflecting on the interview with *Kakutla'mas Anis Tomiko*

I recognize that there came a time when I realized that your socio-emotional needs trumped my need to stay in *Kwakwala*. I also recall physical safety needs being taking priority over the desire to stay solely in our *Bakwamkala*.

Connection – in our interview *Kakutla'mas Anis Tomiko* spoke about her intentions of encouraging feelings of connection and comfort as part of language learning and use. I do agree that is important and a good reminder for myself in how I approach things with you. I do wish to use our language with you in a way that grounds us and connects us in a good way and for it not to cause stress or create discomfort.

“Both languages exist inside of him,”

is what *xus Anis dlu' Kakutla'mas Tomiko* shared with me and I hope that this will always be your existence. I will continue to do my part to ensure that it is.

Ax'exs'adanuxw Kwalesanukw Kwakwala – we want *Kwakwala* to live!

I will give it my best effort in this lifetime to make sure it continues to live in you.

Laxwala'nukwanthus Kwala'yu!

Tlumasān ikañ noke' gaxakus Sañ'yas

(super happy is my heart and mind that you have come to me Sañ'yas)

Olakala Sañ'yasi da xan babagwam

(really creative/clever is my boy)

'Walasān tlamka'an thus

(big pride I have in you)

Malkwālala's xus hamsamala dlu'wi yakantala

(remember your supernatural bird masked dance & language)



Figure 140: *Kwişux da 'nalax* (snowing it is today!)
Sgn'yas in a snowfall *lax Gwa'dzi*. *Katq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufaas, 2022

Our Willie family held a *Pása lax Uk'wǎnalis* in May 2025 and I requested floor time to present *xǎn sasǎm dlu'wi* ceremonial items created as part of this dissertation and to share with our family and community of our *Bak'wǎmkála* journey. I was able to present the *Tsitsep dlu'wǎn* E. *Na'yi* & C. *Mixǎla* but had to make a last-minute change and substitute another *tsep* (previously commissioned for my eldest) instead of the *hǎmsǎml kǎ'e Sǎn'yas*.

It was a significant event to stand with *xǎn dlidlǎdlola* to present the *Tsitsep* to *xǎn sasǎm* at our Willie family *pása* with a *Gukwdzi* full of family and community. It was a challenge to navigate a last-minute change in my plans to present *Sǎn'yas dlu'wis hǎmsǎml* but have some profound reflections from this experience.

Our *Hǎmsǎmála* is regarded as a very sacred dance ceremony and one that is only danced by certain people with the skill set. The masks themselves are also cared for in a very special way and taken out and put away with great care. I understand there are reasons why it was not a good time and there was discomfort with what I was proposing in my hopes to present *Sǎn'yas dlu'wis hǎmsǎml* in this public way.

Also, I have come to realize is that what is happening within our household as part of our *Bak'wǎmkála* reclamation is something different. Our *Bak'wǎmkála* journey has brought ceremony into our daily lives and home. This work that is occurring is incredibly sacred. We do not rely on events held at the *Gukwdzi* for our “cultural fix.”

Our *Bak'wǎmkála* has brought a tremendous amount of sacredness and ceremony into our daily lives within our home and *Sǎn'yas dlu'wis hǎmsǎml* is a physical example of this. *Sǎn'yas* is interconnected *dlu'wis hǎmsǎml* as he is with our *Bak'wǎmkála*.

I hope *Sǎn'yas* will continue to be one *dlu'wis hǎmsǎml dlu'wǎn's Bak'wǎmkála* for the rest of his life and will do what I can to support this sacred relationship.



Figure 141: *Danxalatlas* (sing you will/you are going to sing).
San'yas dlu'wi mgnatsi wearing his *Inuvik* parka. *Kikatg'makwinuxw - Tlilinuxw*,
Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Laxwq̄la'nukwantlasan sasq̄ma

(love I have for all my children)

Ama'ya'nakwala

(becoming smaller)

Summary of Saka (5) - tributes to xan sasam

This last segment of my dissertation mostly contains personal dedications to each of *yudaxwan sasam* but is preceded by some history of the *yudaxw* (3) ceremonial pieces created for them and concludes with sharing about my public presentation of these sacred creations to *xan sasam* at our Willie family *pasa*.

I relate the creation of these sentimental items to our family history preceding myself but also connect them to our household family journey of reclamation, specifically aligning them with our stories of intergenerational language loss and our current efforts in the restoration of our *Bakwamkala*.

The dedications are written for *yudaxwan sasam* and appear in their birth order: *'ngm* (1) - Emaeya *Na'yi* (currently *saka'agu'anxila*, 15 years old), Calai *Mixala* (currently *'na'ng'max'anxila*, 9 years old) and *San'yas* (currently *adlabu'anxila*, 7 years old). Each dedication begins with a *kikata'makw* (photo) of each and a *salam* (love song), songs that I have learned in this active journey over the past 7 years. I speak to each of *xan sasam* of their birth and naming (both *Bakwamxtle'* and english) stories and our (theirs and mine) *Bakwamkala* journey. My intention in writing these pieces for E. *Na'yi*, C. *Mixala* and *San'yas* is to provide insight as to my efforts and to encourage them in carrying on with this reclamation work in their

future life paths and have incorporated this as well as numerous photos especially of them with their ceremonial piece.

Lastly, I share about my presentation of these ceremonial pieces to each of them at our Willie family *p'asa* and how I wasn't able to publicly gift the *hamsam* to *San'yas* due to cultural protocols. Although this was something of significance to navigate it provided stimulus for me to contemplate the profoundness of what is happening within our household. Sacredness and ceremony are occurring within our household almost daily because of learning our ancestral language. We may not be conducting lengthy ceremonies requiring stillness and attentiveness such as those experienced *laxa Gukwdzi* (in the bighouse) but throughout the day we typically are flowing through small sacred segments such as: beginning our day with prayer (expressions of gratitude) either spoken or through song, at mealtimes we say a short prayer – *gilakas'la xwa ha'mgila* – thank you cook, *mu'lan tlasa ha'me* - I am grateful for the food, and throughout the day we express our love for each other regularly - *laxwala'nukwanthus* - love I have for you, *laxwala'nukwanthus ugwaka* - love I have for you also. Our expressions of love in our language are usually accompanied by an embrace – *kapi'da's gaxan* - hug me, and kiss – *mitsi* and as a mother – *nugwa'ams abampa*, I feel a tremendous amount of connection and sacred love *dlu'wan sasam* during these daily interactions.

This is one of my biggest takeaways in learning my language and reclaiming who I am as *Bakwam* is how to love - *Laxwalap'a Ei'laxwql* - love each other loved ones (*gayutl Tlatlasimo'ga'wale'* - Sally Williams who has passed on). Our language has taught me about how our people viewed the concept of love and it is different from the one I had previously known from hollywood movies. Our people saw love as a strengthening, and we see this in the term *laxwe'gila* - strength building.



Figure 142: *K̄as'i lax kayas sesa kw̄alskw̄al'yakw 'w̄ale'* (walk in the path of our ancestors).
E. Na'yi, C. M̄ix̄ala, myself Yola in our Tsitsep and S̄an'yas holding his h̄ams̄gml lax Tayagut at̄li.
K̄atq'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

Conclusion

'Widzolaḡan's ḡan's ḡiyos laḡan's sasame' *

(where would we be without our children)

'nakista laḡ'ida 'naxwala

Aḡus wiwḡ'oḡw is'me

Kaka mudida t̄isala

La ux̄tuwe'sa na'ange

Ḳaxwalaḡa li'laxwala

What would we do without our children

Make sure all is right

With family before

The sun goes

Over the mountain top

Love each other loved ones

Gayut̄l - Gwiyaḡm'wale' (Tom Dawson), *'Walas Gwa'yam* (Richard Dawson),

T̄iat̄asimo'ga'wale' (Sally Williams)

*I have mixed the different phrases together and paired with the tune to the *Kwagu'l* prayer to the rising sun (*gayut̄l Waxawidi*) to use as a nighttime prayer song and put this together as part of completing this dissertation.

Ame'x'id

(to become smaller)

Conclusion

This dissertation encompasses my and my household's *Bak'wamkala* reclamation journey focusing on the course of *k'atla* (6) years of this PhD program from 2019 to 2025. I began this doctoral journey as a nursing mom of a 10 *'makwala* (moon) old who is now *adlabu'anxila* (7 years old). In this beginning we were a family of *saka* (5), with our bonus child *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, living *laxa Snuneymuxw* and now I am mostly a solo parent of my *yudaxw* (3) living *lax Gwa'dzi'*. It has been a profound journey, a wild ride of ups, downs and all arounds, but one I am forever grateful to. This PhD program brought my language back to me and mine and has helped me to heal in ways nothing else has. It has carried me through the recent darkest years of my life providing strength and grounding. The greatest source of *laxwe'gila* (strength gathering) I have experienced in my lifetime.

In this work I share a wide variety of my personal and our household's experiences in reclaiming our *Bak'wamkala*. I follow the framework of creating a *tsep* (ceremonial dance apron) in sharing the various pieces in this dissertation. I have included *kinamida k'ikata'makw* (many photos) to bring life to my writing and better engage with family and community. I have also included videos with the hope of promoting ancestral language reclamation, especially within our nation. Lastly and most near and dear to my *noke'* (heart & mind) I have written dedications to each of *yudaxwan sasqm* (my three children) sharing of their birth, naming and language learning journeys. These dedications accompany the ceremonial pieces created for each of them. These combined pieces are my *Hase' gaxan* (love gift/breath of life) to each of them telling our story of reclamation. *Xan sasqm* (my children) are the first in *yudaxw* (3) generations being

raised with their *Bak'wamkala*. My hope is they will carry this forward contributing to the restoration of our language and the collective wellness of our people.

In beginning this written piece I speak to the relationship I have with the following *awi'nagwis* (lands/waters) featured in this dissertation: *Snuneymuxw*, *Tsaxis*, *Dlaksiwe'*, *Tugwasu*, *Uk'wanalis*, *Tsamas & Gwa'dzi'* and how I have been visiting these places *dlu'wan nakagawe ma'yudlami* C. *Mixala* singing and drumming to express gratitude and ask permission for featuring them in my work and list *ma'l* (2) songs created within our nation in connection with *xan's awi'nagwis*. I use the references of *Bak'wamkala* and *Kwakwala* seemingly interchangeably but the first refers to our ancestral language more generally and the second is a dialect of the *Kwagu'l* (the most prominent of our *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation). I express creativity in my use of fonts, formatting, spacing etc. And each segment is prefaced with *xan's Bak'wamkala* purposefully. The methods/methodology utilized in my work honors *Kwakwaka'wakw* ways of being and Indigenous storywork/storytelling and autoethnography and includes interviews with family and other *li'laxwal* (loved ones). Throughout this dissertation I describe many aspects of my/our language learning journey: *Alixwala* (preparing to leave on a journey) the foundational aspects of my *Bak'wamkala* journey; *Laxwegila* (gathering strength) interviews with family/community and video to engage others; *Kakutlapa* (learning together) raising children with ancestral language & *Sanala* (to be whole) restorative experiences to do with household experiences of reclaiming the use of our language and ceremony; *Ugwakala* (different) unique and special areas of interest and *Hase' gaxan* (breath of life/love gift of mine) dedications to *yudaxwan sasam*. I channel these components into a *Tsepila* (ceremonial dance apron creation) framework honoring my predecessor *Tlatlakul*, Trish Rosborough who aligned her dissertation with our *Kangextola* (ceremonial button blanket), the mother figure to its daughter our *tsep*

(ceremonial dance apron). The creation of a *tsep* has the following components: 1) foundational base, 2) connecting pieces for fastening *tsep* to a *laxwala*, 3) family storywork (design relating to family history), 4) personalized and unique features of buttons, beads, sequins, bells etc., and 5) validation of *tsep* through ceremonial presentation.

My earliest memories in *Bakwamkala* learning date back to my childhood in *Waglisla* with *Haitzaqvla* being the first ancestral language I was exposed to. I later connected to *Kwakwala* in my youthhood once we had moved to *Ukwānalis* from *Waglisla*. Interestingly, I still maintain a strong affinity for our *Haitzaqv* language, and the sounds and rhythm activate a deep and familiar comfort that I don't seem to experience with *Kwakwala*. I then begin with *Ga'man's kan's Kakutle'* (we have now come to learn), some encouraging words-of-wisdom for language learners *gayutl Likwala li'laxwal*, as a prelude to sharing the learning journey of *xan sasqm* and I. This is followed by a snapshot of our path using the following prompts: '*wixdan's gax le* (where have we been)? - the arrival of each of *xan sasqm* stimulated a growing interest and engagement in learning our ancestral language, '*widān's le* (where are we now)? - I am a UVic instructor for a diploma program with *Nawalakw* Healing Society and our *Kwickwasutaineuk-Haxwamis* nations as community partners, a program facilitator with our *Dzawada'enuxw* and *Kwagu'l* nations and attend several classes as part of my ongoing learning. '*witlan's le* (where are we going)? - I aim to continue creating space for *xan's Bakwamkala* within our home in hopes of it becoming the main language spoken by all household members, '*Wigilatlan's kan's la'wile* (what will we do to cross [water])? - My proficiency progress has been centred around *San'yas* (currently age 7) and plan to carry on in this way as it provides a tangible focus and our household still benefits, and '*La'man's laga* (have we arrived)? - I have come to know it will be a lifelong journey for me to become a proficient speaker adapting a seasonal

approach with greater learning indoors, mostly by zoom, in the fall/winter and then maintenance and more outdoor activities, such as soccer, in the spring/summer. In this dissertation I share of my simultaneous Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) and doctoral journey, the use of social media, largely facebook, listing the pros and cons, I provide an overview of the many learning projects and describe the utilization of youtube. All of this required huge efforts and each of these components were highly beneficial to my *Kwakwala* learning *dlu'wǝn sasǝm*.



Figure 143: *Tsatsq'yasola* (sisters)!
'Nula E. Na'yi dlu'wis T'sa'ya C. Mixala.
K'ikatq'makw'inuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

I interviewed 10 (*la'stu*) *li'laxwāl* as part of my doctoral research including *xān sasām*: *dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, E. *Na'yi* & C. *Mixāla*. I opted not to interview *Sān'yās* although I had planned to, I became aware it was irrelevant to inquire about his journey of learning our *Bak'wām'kala* when he has been emersed in it since 10 '*mākwāla* (moons) old. This I see as a point of significance in my research and simultaneous doctoral and household language learning journey. I provide interviewee descriptions where I speak to the relationships with each of those interviewed from outside of our household. This includes those responsible for *Bak'wām'kala/Kwak'wala* teaching at the schools *xān sasām* attend/ed: *Anis Tomiko* – *Sān'yās*' emerging immersion *Bak'wām'kala* preschool *kākūtla'mas* (teacher) as well as *xān egas* (my female friend) and a *taxwāla* (loved one); *Kidilāme*, Robin – the *Bak'wām'kala kākūtla'mas lax Gwa'sala 'Nak'waxda'xw* school where *xān sasāmānu'xw* (C. *Mixāla* & *Sān'yās* attend), a peer and extended family member of *xān sasām* and the daughter of *Tlatlakul'wale'*, the late Trish Rosborough, who was influential in both my *Bak'wām'kala* and doctoral paths and who I am honoring in the *tsepila* framework; *Tsihwalaga*, Pat – the *Kwak'wala kākūtla'mas lax Wagalus* school where E. *Na'yi* attended and an extended family member of mine. I relate to *ma't* (two) peers who provided my household and I with teaching support: *Kamināwadzi*, Pewi, a highly advanced learner and teacher of *Kwak'wala* for over 25 years, supporting me in the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP), and a relative, and *Lalxān dala'ogwa*, Keisha, a facilitator of the '*Wiga'xān's Yakāntalape* (let's speak together) online family learning program also a mother of young children. Lastly, I speak to my relationships with *xān's Ni'noxsola* (our wise ones): *Hawetlagwila* , Isabel and *Xā'niyusame'ga*, Nora, first language speakers of our language who were a beautiful support to myself, my household and to our *Kwak'wala* community group while living and learning in *Snuneymuxw*.

I summarize each of the interviews in order of occurrence: 1) *Dhu'li'gas* Scarlett, a gentle and encouraging dialogue to do with her participation in our household learning, a good beginning to the series of conversational interviews; 2) *Anis Tomiko*, Michelle *Hinatsu* (*K'akutla'mas ka'e San'yas*), an enriched conversation reassuring me that my efforts with *San'yas* are apparent and both languages live in him. Also, highlighting the importance of love and connection as the foundation for communication in any language and to focus on creating more space for *Bakwamkala* rather than how much of each language is being used. In this interview I shared my realization that *San'yas*' socio-emotional needs took precedence over my need to stay in *xan's Bakwamkala*. 3) *Tsiwalaga*, Pat Dawson (*Kwakwala kakutla'mas lax Wagalus school* where E. *Na'yi* attended) - an interesting point brought forward in this interview was E. *Na'yi* (grade 7 at the time) often finished first in an online game indicating her knowledge of our language but did not share this knowledge outwardly with peers in class. Along with other culturally relevant and meaningful activities like medicine gathering, *Tsiwalaga* teaches her students our *hawa'x'ala* (prayer) ensuring they can open a gathering and provided a copy of one to me. I have since learned and been using this *hawa'x'ala* in my home and programs. 4) *Kidilame*, Robin Rosborough (*Bakwamkala kakutla'mas lax Gwa'sala 'Nakwaxda'xw school* where C. *Mixala* & *San'yas* attend), this dialogue brought forward some aspects of how both *sasqmanu'xw*'s understanding and use of *xan's Bakwamkala* is showing up at school, including their love of song and familiarity with books. It also highlighted C. *Mixala*'s confidence in use of our language and pride in sharing of her name *Mixala* (to dream). Interestingly, C. *Mixala* had more awareness of dialect differences and would keep with what she has learned at home whereas *San'yas* did not and would follow the flow of what was put forward to him. *San'yas* was in preschool and C. *Mixala* in grade 'nqm (1) when these interviews took place.

5) *Kaminawadzi*, Pewi Alfred - *Kaminawadzi* commented on the interest and engagement of each of *xan sasam* throughout the duration of our facebook projects that ran for 3.5 years noticing that *San'yas* went from crying in the background as an infant to demanding his turn (1.5 to 5 years of age), C. *Mixala* maintained a steady flow throughout (3.5 to 7 years of age) and E. *Na'yi* started strong and then depleted (9 to 12.5 years). A good discussion on the trials and tribulations of learning and teaching, that mistakes are par for the course and it is imperative that we keep going. 6) *Lalxan Dala'ogwa*, Keisha Everson - This discussion with a fellow learner, facilitator and mother provided some highly insightful concepts based on our shared experiences specifically the importance of welcoming learning spaces for family (engaging all family members in the learning), the challenges of one parent being responsible for bringing language forward (learning and teaching) within household and a seasonal approach to learning with indoor activities in the fall/winter and outdoor activities in the spring/summer. 7) *Hawetlagwila*, Isabel (Robertson) Seward & *Xa'niyusame'ga*, Nora Fred - In this conversation *xan's Noxsola* share of their experiences of day school and the negative impact this had on them as children and on our nation and language. They also express a positive disposition towards our *Kwakwala* work, appreciation of how it uplifts them to see the bringing back of not only our language but our culture, love and care for one another. 8) E. *Na'yi* & *Dlu'li'gas* Scarlett - This interview is largely a *dlis'ala* (loving lecture) from me to my older *sasam* who seemed to be losing interest in our *Bakwamkala* initiatives. I give plenty of acknowledgement for their efforts and encourage them both in carrying on. I also provide an overview, from my perspective, of all the good reasons to learn our ancestral language. 9) C. *Mixala* - This capture with C. *Mixala* who had just turned *adlabu* (7) just a few days earlier was a beautiful wrap up to this series of interviews. It is short compared to the others but contains a powerful perspective of our language being a gift and

an incredibly positive outlook of learning *Kwakwala*. In preparing to conduct these interviews, I anticipated insight coming mostly from those I interviewed but what occurred was more of my own insights stimulated from the dialogue. I include a reflection of the *Namakala* radio podcast with myself, *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* from 2021 and was amazed at how much we were doing as a household as part of our *Bakwamkala* reclamation journey during this time of covid. It came forward we began learning our language at home with the onset of covid. It was interesting to notice the engagement of *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett and E. *Na'yi* at this time when they were 11 and 10 years old comparing to the interview, I conducted with them *ma'l* (2) years later when they had seemingly lost interest at the ages of 13 and 12. I include a video entitled: *Ax'exsdanuxwex Kwalesgnukwex Kwakwala* (we want Kwakwala to live)! This video encapsulates both the positive and negative experiences of reclaiming an endangered ancestral language. I will use it to share my/our experience with family and community in hopes of inspiring others in this reclamation work.



Figure 144: *Kabu'yud* (waist; to clasp, embrace or hug around the).
Nugwa'am's abampa Yola dlu'wan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi & nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Mixala.
Kikata'makw'inuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

I share deeply of our ancestral language reclamation in the following areas: *Kakutlapa* (let's learn together) and *Sanala* (to be whole). I explore my experience of learning collaboratively *dlu'wan sasam* (with my children) and of restorative occurrences with the ones directly connected *ka'an sasam* (to my children) being the most profound. *Kakutlapa* and *Sanala* connect as our household family stories of reclaiming who we are as *Bakwam* through the learning of our *yakantala*, *xan's Bakwamkala*. *Kakutlapa* (learning together) - I share of: connectively learning *dlu'wan sasam*, an in-house speaker group, I practice with daily supporting my proficiency progress; my experience of being the sole person bringing our language forward and encouraging its household use; the extraordinariness of supporting *yudaxwan sasam* (my three children) with *Bakwamkala* but also ensuring their socio-emotional and dietary needs are

met; *x̣an saṣqm*'s *Bak'wamḳala* understanding and use is directly correlated with my proficiency level when each were born; *x̣anyaṣqn* (amazed I am), my amazement in seeing and hearing the various ways our language is showing through *x̣an saṣqm* also understanding that the full extent may not be known until further along; how my desire for us to become speakers motivates greater engagement *dlu'ẉan saṣqm* different from how it would be if not reclaiming our language; and I highlight the chaotic beauty of family learning. *Ṣanala* (to be whole) - I provide specific examples of restoration involving each of *x̣an saṣqm* including: E. *Na'yi* & *dlu'li'gas* Scarlett - *Gaxalilitso*, conducting a coming-of-age ceremonial week with the inclusion of *x̣an's Bak'wamḳala* particularly in the final dressing ceremony, C. *Mix̣qala* & house brushing – supporting C. *Mix̣qala* in her desire to join a house brushing and speaking our language to her as we moved around clearing the energy from our home. *Ṣan'yas* & *ḥamṣqamala*, inspired by *Ṣan'yas*' interest in our *ḥamṣqamala* (supernatural bird masked dance) I reached out on facebook asking for support and gathered the words to use for this dance ceremony. I also describe other areas of restoration influencing our household: *Bak'wamḳala* engagement is a coping mechanism for intergenerational trauma, as well as grief and loss; singing, song creation & prayer have been brought to life within our home providing daily grounding and joyfulness, similar to the joy I experienced as a child singing and dancing our *Haitzaqv* children's social dances led by *x̣an's Ump'ẉale'* singing and drumming. *Ḳakuṭap̣a* and *Ṣanala* are our household experiences of “learning together” and “restoration.” They are all elements of our ancestral language reclamation journey happening within our family home *dlu'ẉan saṣqm*.

I go on to describe an array of ILR topics not directly related to *x̣an saṣqm* and/or our daily life, mostly occurring outside of our household and to do with the larger context of our nations' *Bak'wamḳala* revitalization and reclamation. These topics are as follows: the importance

of story (telling/ing/work) especially the ability to orate our stories in our language; connection to the *qwi'nagwis* (lands/waters) is essential and land-inspired learning can be more feasible than land-based, also highlighting the uniqueness of those living alongside a river such as our *Dzawada'enuxw* whose village of *Uk'wqnalís* is next to the *Gwa'yi* river and this relationship is integral to revitalization efforts; the differences between urban and in-community learning with the main one being the greater need for community connection and cultural uplifting within language learning programs in the city; online learning, which became a mainstay in language learning programs during covid times, has its pros and cons but has made learning more accessible for urban learners and minimized the differences compared to learners in the homelands; the need for welcoming family-friendly programming that ideally supports the needs of all members, the importance of ensuring the voices of our children and youth are heard especially in programming that is meant for them; the perspective of our language as a *dhugwe'* (treasure) and/or *taxwqala* (loved one); the shift in worldview and/or seeing the world as our ancestors did that occurs when reclaiming ancestral language; learning language has been life changing and hope that others will feel encouraged to learn creating a better future for us as *Bak'wam* peoples; there seems to be a lack of trauma informed practice and lateral kindness and it would be helpful to create a resource for use in *Bak'wamk'ala* programs; a “why bother?” list is included with many good reasons to bother in the vast undertaking of revitalizing an ancestral language; increased creativity in resource production would help learners to better engage; related to this I share of participating in an Indigenous Digital Constellations program at Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity where I learned about aspects of film and created videos and hope to build on this experience and produce creative resource videos and meaningful films to do with ancestral reclamation; infusing language and movement for wellness including *Kwak'wala*

ká'yaka (soccer) has become a significant part of my reclamation journey and hope to encourage others with a video created in collaboration with Red Girl Rising; I have also come to know activism is a part of revitalization work and participated in a local *Kwakwaka'wakw* fashion show to advocate for *xan's Bakwámkala* to the local community of *Gwa'dzi'* (Port Hardy).

In this dissertation I have written personal pieces to each of *yudaxwan sasam* and these appear in their birth order: *'nam* (1) - Emaeya *Na'yi* (currently *saka'aguanxila*, 15 years old), Calai *Mixgla* (currently *'na'na'max'anxila*, 9 years old) and *San'yas* (currently *adlabu'anxila*, 7 years old). Ceremonial pieces have also been created for each of *yudaxwan sasam* as part of my doctoral work. I connect these to our family history and link them to our household family journey of reclamation, relating to our stories of intergenerational language loss and our current efforts in the restoration of our *Bakwámkala*. These dedications to *xan sasam* are written for and to them directly and each contain *kinamida kikatq'makw* (many photos), a *salqm* (love song) - songs learned in this active journey over the past *adlabu* (7) years that I have sung to them, their birth and naming (both *Bakwámxtle'* and english) stories and our (theirs and mine) connected *Bakwámkala* journey. In writing these pieces for E. *Na'yi*, C. *Mixgla* and *San'yas* my intention is to provide them with an understanding of my efforts in hopes of them continuing this great work of reclaiming who we are as *Bakwám* by learning our language.



Figure 145: *Abayad* (mother, has a).

Nugwa'ams gbampa Yola dlu'wǎn alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas wearing *xǎn's Inuvik parkas lax Gwa'dzi'.*
Kikata'makw'inuxw - Tli'li'nuxw - Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

In this great journey of reclaiming *xǎn's Bak'wǎmkala dlu'wǎn sasǎm* there have been many amazing attributes but will highlight those that stand out as my biggest takeaways.

youtube has been incredibly beneficial to my simultaneous doctoral and *Bak'wǎmkala* reclamation journey. I bring our language to life daily in our home through youtube which is especially helpful since we have no regular connection to a first language speaker. I have also been able to access ILR and other topic areas on youtube to listen to while completing household tasks such as food preparation, dishes, laundry, sweeping, mopping etc. I wouldn't have completed my simultaneous PhD nor progressed as far as I have in my language learning without youtube videos/audio.

My desire for us to become speakers of our language motivates greater engagement *dhu'wan sasgm* and know I am interacting with them differently in raising them than I would if we weren't learning *xan's Bak'wamkala* collaboratively. I am not the most interactive parent by nature but am always looking to capitalize on engagement opportunities *dhu'wan sasgm* if it will progress our learning. Examples of this include: *dhu'wan galma'yudlami E. Na'yi* - I text her daily in *Kwakwala* to connect, encourage and express love to her while she is at school, *nakagawe ma'yudlami C. Mixala* – recently she has been asking about the weather to determine her choice of outfits and I will look it up on my phone and we review the forecast in *xan's Bak'wamkala*, *Alxste' ma'yudlami San'yas* - lately he has been asking “what’s for wunch?” and I will read out the school’s menu in our language. I shared about this on facebook and the school has now begun to list the menu in *Bak'wamkala* – *ga'axsta* (breakfast), *a'expaga* (snack), & *nakelaxsta* (lunch)!

In his preschool year I reached my limit in supporting *San'yas'* socio-emotional needs in solely speaking *xan's Bak'wamkala* to him. This was a hard circumstance for me to navigate as I was determined to speak only our language to him but realized his well-being was more important than my need to stay in *Kwakwala*. At the time I felt disappointed in myself, but I know now I did the best I could and allowing for *mamatakala* to be a part of our communication made for a better relationship between the two of us. Also, it seemed that once *San'yas* began to master english it enabled him to better learn and use our language too.

San'yas has been a tangible focus for my proficiency development. I do my best to speak as much as I can him in our language daily and aim to build my vocab around his language development needs. Early on in my journey did I realize it was unrealistic to fully meet the needs of each household member, keeping *San'yas* as the focal point is manageable and everyone still benefits from our *Bak'wamkala* growth.

One of my most profound takeaways in learning my language and reclaiming who I am as a *Bakwam* is how to love. *Laxwalaḡa Li'laxwala* - love each other loved ones (*gayutl Tlatlasimo'ga'wale'* - Sally Williams who has passed on). Our language has taught me how our ancestors viewed the concept of love. Our people saw love as a strengthening, and we see this in the term *laxwe'gila* - strength building. *Hawetlagwila* - Isabel (Robertson) Seward speaks to this in our interview relating how we are bringing back our ways of caring for and loving one another in correlation with our language reclamation. *Anis Tomiko* in our conversation refers to love and connection being foundational to communication in any language. This she shared with me when I felt defeated because I couldn't maintain speaking solely in our language with *San'yas* as I didn't have the capacity to best care for his socio-emotional needs. I realize now *xan's Bakwamkala* has really taught me about how to love deeply from this strengthening perspective and this ability to carry myself from this place of love now takes precedence over my previous desire to speak only *xan's Bakwamkala dlu'wan San'yas*.

I embarked on this journey of learning my language along with a doctoral path as both an interest in how our languages heal us and to make space for my own personal learning. This interest in healing had more to do with my desire to make a difference for others as I had been involved in counselling work with our *Bakwam* people for the previous decade. I realize now the deep healing I personally have experienced from *xan's Bakwamkala*. There was a time I thought if I worked hard on myself for an intensive period, I would be “healed.” Similarly, I thought if I worked hard at learning my language, I could possibly become fluent and not necessarily have to keep working so hard at it. I am aware now that both require lifelong efforts.

I came into this PhD program seeking to explore the connection between ancestral language learning and healing for our people. My research focus shifted from this to exploring

my and my household family's experience of learning. Along with this our family structure shifted and I am mostly on my own raising *yudaxwǎn sasǎm* (my three children) with our language. While this was a significant shift in both research focus and our family unit there are many profound learnings in my household self-study and the biggest takeaway is the intergenerational healing benefits of reclaiming *xǎn's Bakwǎmkala*.



Figure 146: *Hi'lanǎma* (something inherited from someone).
Nugwa'am's ǎbǎmpǎ Yola dlu'wǎn sasǎmǎnu'xw holding drums inherited from *xǎn's Ump'wǎle'*.
Kikǎtǎ'makw'inuǎxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

I continue to grieve the passing of *x̣an Wak'wa* as well as the dismantling of my family unit and partnership. In both circumstances I have felt a tremendous amount of grief, loss and hopelessness. My *Bak'wamkala* has given me the tools to navigate this trauma in a way that nothing else has. Each day I express gratitude to creator in our language for all the good things in my life. This practice of gratitude enables me to live life more positively, always looking for glimmers of hope and not staying stuck for too long in the depths of despair. This is also how we *hawa'x'ala* (pray) by expressing gratitude and reclaiming prayer for myself has been profound. Prayer songs are particularly powerful and as part of our *hawa'x'ala* (prayer) I think of *x̣an li'laxwal* (my loved ones) lovingly manifesting good energy from *x̣an noke'* (my heart and mind), especially those who are struggling even those who have hurt me. In times where things seem hopeless the ability to *hawa'x'ala dlu'wan's Bak'wamkala* (pray in our language) expressing *lawala* (love) and *mu'la* (gratitude) is a powerful practice.

Throughout my *Bak'wamkala* reclamation journey I have created songs to support our household learning, but more recently I have begun to learn ceremonial songs created by others, some originating from long ago. I have come to know that to truly become a speaker of your language you must also become a singer. Through song I feel our language come alive within me and become *naman noke'* (one heart/one mind) with my being. I have been working on this for myself, role modelling this in my household and encouraging others to do the same.

I have realized learning through song is not only helpful for language learning but also beneficial for healing. Lately, when feeling off I yearn to sing and drum and will do so if possible. If it's not possible, I typically will pray through expressing gratitude and love in our language. I find the combination of vibrations of the drum and vocalizing to be highly regulating. I also find the words to be deeply meaningful and poetic and some of the older songs' tunes are

enchanting. It is a skill to sing and drum simultaneously and am learning our different drumbeats. I have become aware that this combination of beats with vocalizing is incredibly healing and like EMDR – eye movement desensitization and reprocessing, an alternative to talk therapy, that includes bilateral stimulation. As a certified counsellor I have received training in EMDR and although I understand the benefits and do encourage others to try it, I personally found the protocol to be too rigid for my liking as a facilitator. A beautiful realization to know our singing, drumming and dance includes similar elements to EMDR and can support us in our wellness.

As a child I have fond memories of *xan's Ump'wale'* (our dad who has passed) singing in our home. I remember him lying on the kitchen floor face up using the floor as a drum with his hand. His voice and drumming would reverberate throughout our home *lax Wág!is!a*. I remember feeling at ease in these moments. Given our family history of intergenerational trauma our household had its highs and lows, *xan's Ump'wale'* also had his fluctuations and was moody. But in these times, he was in his element, and it helped our entire household to be grounded. I have begun to carry this on in my household and will sing and drum as a purposeful way to regulate myself *dhu'wan sasqm* (with my children).

What is happening within our household is something different. Sacredness and ceremony are occurring within our household regularly in connection to our ancestral language. Throughout the day we flow through small sacred segments such as beginning our day with our *hawa'x'ala* (prayer, expressions of gratitude) either spoken or through song and we express our love for each other through words in our language accompanied by an embrace and often a *mitsi* (kiss)! I feel a tremendous amount of strengthening and sacred love *dhu'wan sasqm* during these exchanges.

In our household we have been able to restore some of our ceremonies such as: *Gaxalilitso* (coming-of-age) along with the use of our language. This to me is really something of significance as most of our ceremonies occur in a larger context *laxa Gukwdzi*, and often not with the use of *xan's Bakwamkala*. It is remarkable that we as a household have been able to conduct ceremony amongst ourselves using our ancestral language. It is realigning to use the language with the ceremonies were originally created and not only to bring our language back into the home but ceremony as well.



Figure 147: *La'amtlan's ɫa'yugwalisayasutl tsa hixalisayasutl tsqn's a'iki Gigama'ya* (it is said we shall be changed on the earth by the one that comes down to set the world right our Chief above).
Nugwa'am's abampa Yola, danxalan dlu'wgn sasqmanu'xw.
Kikatq'makw'inuxw - Tli'li'nuxw, Kimberley Kufaas, 2025

I have been singing and drumming the *Kwagu't* prayer to the rising sun *dlu'wgn sasqmanu'xw* on the roadside while we wait for the bus in the mornings. There is so much involved in this morning activity – we are reclaiming our language, our song, our prayer and the drum and vocal vibrations of our song help to co-regulate our systems. This *Kwagu't* prayer

speaks to creator coming to earth to make things right. When I sing this prayer song, I envision the healing of our people through the reclamation of *x̄an's Bak'wamk'ala*. I sing each verse 3x as I learned it this way and think about *yudaxwan sasam* and envision our connected healing and a good lifepath for each of them. I also *kapa* (hug) them, *mits'a* (kiss) them and *niklas* (tell) them I love them all in our language and then send them on the bus in this way – with *taxwala* (love), with *hawa'x'ala* (prayer), with *nakalkala* (at peace within) and all of this has come from the reclamation of our language.

If I could go back in time knowing what I know now I would give myself a lot more grace, not be so hard on myself or *x̄an sasam*, let the criticisms of others (including perceived critiques) slide and trust the process. Looking back there was plenty of challenges to maneuver through and various points that caused me stress and/or had me questioning myself but now know I have worked hard, sacrificed, carried myself with *ik da'la x̄an noke'* (a good heart and mind) and intention. All of this adds up to a vast effort and worthwhile contributions to the betterment of our people through this revitalization movement of *x̄an's Bak'wamk'ala*. In the words of Bobby Joe, “when our languages are restored, we are restored” and I deeply believe this to be true as I have experienced this myself. I will continue to support *x̄an's li'laxwal* with our collective wellness through the reclamation of our ancestral language.

It is tremendous work raising *x̄an sasam dlu'wan's Bak'wamk'ala* (my children with our ancestral language). It is a daily practice and intentional effort to speak to them using what I know to the best of my ability. I do my best to ensure they are regularly exposed to our language in our home mostly through my words (or song) supplementing with youtube, along with meeting their socio-emotional, dietary and activity needs, I am working to meet their *Bak'wamk'ala* learning needs honoring each of their interest and engagement levels. I had

previously hoped to create a household of speakers within a timely manner but now am aiming to raise good *Bakwams* (human beings/Indigenous) through a longer path of reclamation.

In our *Kwakwaka'wakw* nation we are at the beginning stages of revitalization work and realistically there isn't the resources or support to "raise our children in the language." To do so would be a huge undertaking involving great sacrifice for most. However, it is still an incredibly worthwhile endeavour to "raise our children with our language" in whatever capacity you can manage. I invested *yudaxw* (3) years into the Mentor Apprentice Program (MAP) of intensive language learning, while also moving through *yudaxw* years (of what will be *adlabu* (7) years) of a doctoral program during covid times with *yudaxwan sasam* who were young at the time. In this duration I was very committed and worked hard at my desire to learn our language in hopes of creating a speaker household. While I have no regrets about the efforts I put in during this period it was not a sustainable pace. We are influenced to believe we are in a race against time with the passing of each first language speaker and this is a hard reality, but it helps no one to overly stress ourselves in the pursuit of language learning. In viewing *xan's Bakwamkala* as a *laxwala*, *xan's laxwala* would not wish for us to suffer on its behalf, *xan's laxwala* would want us to enjoy the process as a journey, not an endgame, and to appreciate the many enriched benefits that come from learning along the way.

I do very much want to be a proficient speaker and am committed to spending the rest of my life working towards this. But I have come to know learning our language is not just about learning to speak, it is about reclaiming who we are as *Bakwam* through the learning and use of *xan's Bakwamkala*. Through the reclamation of my language, I am now restoratively grounded in being *Bakwam* and maintaining a spiritual sense of connection to the universe and growing confidence in my path forward. It has been a beautiful mess of a journey, full of family chaos, and a deeply meaningful and life changing endeavour to learn collaboratively *dlu'wan sasgm*.

Laxwala'pa ti'laxwal – love each other loved ones. *He'gm* – that is all.



Figure 148: *Gilakas' xan tlaxan wi'ump* (I give thanks to my ancestors). *Nugwa'am Yola* wearing a *tsep* belonging to *xan Gagas'wale'* Lillian Gladstone, *tistak'wa* by Copper Canoe woman and a spruce root hat *lax Tayagul atli*. *Kata'makwinuxw - Tli'li'nuxw*, Kimberley Kufas, 2025

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