

**In the voices of the *Sul-hween/Elders*, on the *Snuw'uyulh* teachings of *Respect*:
their greatest concerns regarding *Snuw'uyulh* today in the Coast Salish
Hul'q'umi'num' Treaty Group territory**

by

S. Marlo Paige
BA, Malaspina University-College, 2004

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

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction,
Faculty of Education

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University of Victoria

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This research is based on the voices of the *Hul'q'umi'num' Sul-hween/Elders* who participated on this project. They are of the Coast Salish people, specifically from the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty group area. The *Sul-hween/Elders* have significant concerns regarding the struggles that face the younger generations that surround them. They are concerned with the changes that are occurring in their culture and the fundamental principles of *Snuw'uyulh*. The *Sul'hween/Elders* discussed the effects of colonization and western society, what *Snuw'uyulh* means the importance of *Snuw'uyulh* and the teaching and learning style of *Snuw'uyulh*. The *Sul-hween/Elders* described the methods by which *Snuw'uyulh* can accompany and navigate an individual through childhood, puberty, parenting, grief and death. *Snuw'uyulh* is fundamental for unity, communication and family protocol.

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The CURA *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty Group team includes: Dr. Thomas Hukari, Tim Kulchyski (HTG CURA Community Coordinator) and Willie Seymour (HTG *Sul-hween/Elder*).

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to all of the *Sul-hween/Elders* who have contributed to my development; I thank especially my late uncle Chester Thomas, for telling me to go to school. The *Sul-hween/Elders* helped me through the trials in my life and saw me to brighter days. They showed me the importance of the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* and taught me how to apply them to my life today. Thus, over many years, began the conception of this thesis. Their loving and caring words laid down the path for my life and I attempt to honour them with this thesis. I also dedicate my life and my work to the *Ta't Mustimuwah/Ancestors* before me, who prayed for us for thousands of years.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“In this great future, you cannot forget your past...”
(Ford, 1975)

Introduction

This thesis is based on the *Snuw'uyulh* of the Coast Salish, specifically the *Hul'q'umi'num'* speaking people. What is *Snuw'uyulh*? *Snuw'uyulh* means teachings and education in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* language (Charlie, 2009). *Snuw'uyulh* are the fundamental rules of life, the truths of life that are based on the *Hul'q'umi'num'* concept of *Respect*. What is *Hul'q'umi'num'*? *Hul'q'umi'num'*, is a language that is spoken in a portion of the Coast Salish territory by the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* people are a sub-group of the Coast Salish people of the south-east coast of Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland and the northern coast of Washington state. The Coast Salish people are a group of people that share a common culture and similar language dialects in British Columbia and Washington State. (Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group: six First Nations working as one, n.d.).

One of the challenges of conducting this type of research involved in this thesis is to “find a way of bringing together Indigenous ways of knowing and Western ways of conducting research, specifically qualitative inquiry” The literature review will:

- draw and outline examples of how European contact and European intention affected Aboriginal people;
- discuss the colonization and assimilation process and how theses affected Aboriginal people;
- piece together the historical effects of colonization that contributes to the generational gaps, loss of cultural knowledge or cultural understanding; and
- Discuss the concept and importance of redefining Aboriginal identity from an Aboriginal perspective; as well, the importance of Aboriginal ways of knowing

and cross-cultural education and how this can assist in Aboriginal success and healing through traditional knowledge.

This thesis attempts to present the words of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Elders in an academic format. I will use two forms of dialect: implementation of the written *Hul'q'umi'num'* dialect; and common written English format. The intended audience is the *Hul'q'umi'num'* community.

Research goal and intended audience

This thesis is designed for the community members of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty Group area and any educator who wishes to develop a deeper understanding of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. The goals of this thesis are:

- to explore the greatest concerns of the *Sul-hween/Elders* regarding *Snuw'uyulh* today, and to attempt to describe the importance of this Aboriginal perspective of *Respect* in an academic format;

Welcome to the concerns of the Sul-hween/Elders

I wish to welcome you to the journey that is this thesis. As we walk together through the pages, we will explore the concerns regarding a few *Hul'q'umi'num'* *Sul-hween/Elders* with regard to *Snuw'uyulh*. At times, we may feel discomfort as a *Hul'q'umi'num'* or as a non-Aboriginal person because some of the topics are challenging. We may need to 'stretch' a little, mentally, emotionally or spiritually, in order to understand their concerns. It is important to understand that the *Snuw'uyulh* of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people asks us as individuals to take the time for introspection and asks us to evolve and mature as spiritual human beings. I have had to take a great length of time to ingest and understand this incredible worldview; I now see that it could assist with the challenges of living in current times. I have had to grow and mature as an

individual to understand and write about the concerns regarding the *Sul-hween/Elders* and will continue to grow, for many years, in order to fulfill my small role growing out of this research.

Approval process for this research

It is important to understand the approval process, to clarify to the reader that this research was of importance to the *Hul'q'umi'num'* community. It is important for the community to understand that approval for this type of research was extensive. This thesis required the approval and support of:

- the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty Group (HTG) executive board;
- HTG *Sul-hween/Elders* advisory board;
- the Community University Research Alliance (CURA) *Hul'q'umi'num'* *Sul-hween/Elders* advisory board;
- the Community University Research Alliance *Hul'q'umi'num'* sub-committee *Sul-hween/Elders* advisory board;
- the Community University Research Alliance steering committee, the steering committee chair, the principle investigator, the HTG facilitator, and the HTG CURA coordinator;
- the *Sul-hween/Elders'* who participated on this project;
- Arvid Charlie, a respected *Hul'q'umi'num'* Elder, who reviewed and critiqued this thesis for cultural content and translated some subtitles into *Hul'q'umi'num'*. Arvid Charlie granted his approval for the representation of the *Sul-hween/Elders* words, ensuring that I did not go beyond my capabilities;
- the University of Victoria thesis committee; and
- The University of Victoria ethics board.

This project was taken seriously by the community because this specific type of work has not been done, especially with this level of consent.

Personal connection to the topic

My personal connection to the *Snuw'uyulh* is that I am a Coast Salish woman whose family roots span the Coast Salish territory of southern British Columbia, specifically Vancouver Island. I strive to find success as an Aboriginal woman, while maintaining my Aboriginal identity in western society. To find success in current times as an Aboriginal woman, I have had to embark on an individual journey to reclaim my Aboriginal culture and heritage. This reclamation of my Aboriginal identity was a key component in finding success as an Aboriginal woman in western society. My identity-exploration journey has given me the opportunity to further my understanding of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* teachings of *Snuw'uyulh*. The Coast Salish *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* have maintained a high degree of morals, integrity, work ethics and an elaborate and intricate philosophy that guided their daily lives: the teachings of *Respect/Snuw'uyulh*.

This philosophy was echoed to me through the teachings of my *Sul-hween/Elders* and is commonly known as teachings of “*Respect*”, in this case, *Respect* from a *Hul'q'umi'num'* perspective. Throughout my life, I have analyzed the stories of my *Sul-hween/Elders*; I have extracted the teachings and applied them to my life. Any success that I encounter today is not derived from western philosophy or western society; the success that I encounter is achieved through the teachings of my Aboriginal *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*. For the most part, the teachings are based on the *Hul'q'umi'num'* concept of *Respect* which is the basis of *Snuw'uyulh*.

Yes, I drive a car, I attend a University, I shop at the grocery store, and I have consumed western medicine. One could argue that I cannot say, “Any success that I encounter today is not derived from western philosophy or western society.” I believe

that I can, as my philosophy is *Hul'q'umi'num'*, not western. My success is based on the fact that I am *Hul'q'umi'num'* and that I have adapted the *Hul'q'umi'num'* philosophy to meet my needs today. By no means do I intend to offend non-Aboriginal people or believers in western philosophy; these statements clarify my connection to this topic.

The processes of colonization, assimilation, acculturation, and genocide have eroded the connections of many Aboriginal people to their ancestral roots as well as to their ways of living and spiritual practices. I strive to resurrect any resemblance of my *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors'* esteemed characteristics to find success in this concrete tundra that I call western society by creating a *Hul'q'umi'num'* Aboriginal sense of identity. As an Aboriginal woman, my personal goal is to find a way to assist Aboriginal people to find success in the western educational system while maintaining their cultural identities and traditional language. This is my commitment and the foundation for this thesis.

Terminology

This thesis focuses on the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people; however, it includes literature from the United States of America, Australia and New Zealand. For the purpose of this thesis, the following terms (presented by topic, not alphabetically) have been used:

- A. The term “Aboriginal People” is used throughout the writing in this thesis. It is currently the most inclusive term of all referents to Aboriginal people, as defined below. It is used specifically in the literature review to connect the Aboriginal literature to this thesis, as the *Hul'q'umi'num'* speaking people can be defined as a group within the larger Aboriginal populations.

Aboriginal People: The original or earliest known; native; indigenous people (Merriam-Webster online, 2009). Aboriginal People are defined in the Canadian Constitution as all indigenous people of Canada, which includes Indian (status and non-status), Métis, and Inuit people (Muckle, 1998). Aboriginal People is a term defined in the Constitution Act of 1982 referring to all indigenous peoples (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998a). For this thesis, the term Aboriginal will be used specifically and thoroughly to describe the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people.

B. The following term and definition is used to describe the information gathered regarding Aboriginal knowledge in the literature review.

Aboriginal Knowledge: Used synonymously with “traditional knowledge” and “local knowledge” to differentiate the knowledge developed by a given community from the knowledge generated through universities, government research centers, and private industry (Grenier, 1998; Warren, 1992).

C. The terms described in this section describe terms used in this thesis specific to the research topic.

Coast Salish people: The Coast Salish people are a group of people that share a common culture and similar dialects. The communities span sections of eastern Vancouver Island as well as portions of the Lower Mainland and expand into the State of Washington (Hul'qumi'num Treaty Group: six First Nations working as one, n.d.)

Sul-hween/Elders are the *Hul'q'umi'num'* *Sul-hween/Elders* (male and female) who participated in this thesis.

***Hul'q'umi'num'* people:** The *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty Group territory consists of six Aboriginal communities: Chemainus First Nation, Cowichan Tribes, Halalt first Nation, Lake Cowichan First Nation, Lyackson First Nation, and Penelakut Tribe. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* language binds the traditional territory, culture and history. The (Hul'qumi'num' Treaty Group: six First Nations working as one, n.d.).

Ta't Mustimuhw/Ancestors: are the *Sul-hween/Elders* who have passed away; the parents, grandparents, great-grandparents and great-great-grandparents and so on of the current *Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in the *Snuw'uyulh* focus groups. The *Sul-hween/Elders* refer to their *Sul-hween/Elders* as the 'Old people'.

Yester-year is a term used by the *Sul-hween/Elders* in the *Snuw'uyulh* focus groups, meaning the years associated with their childhood or their *Ta't Mustimuhw* lifetimes.

Link to education

“Aboriginal wisdom places the present generation at the fulcrum of history, looking back seven generations to where we have come from, looking forward seven generations to the children not yet born. The promise of education will be fulfilled. Aboriginal people know that the will to learn is inseparable from the will to live. The hope that Aboriginal ways of knowing and learning will be restored to dignity has stayed alive, sometimes like a dampened fire, through difficult years”

(M. B. Castellano, et al, 2000, p. xvii).

When an Aboriginal child leaves their home and enters the western educational system, the child leaves behind his/her culture, beliefs (Aikenhead, 1997; Aikenhead &

Huntely, 1999) and language. The child then enters a new system that is foreign in many ways. Many of the Aboriginal children and youth who participate in the western system do not easily find success (Bell, 2004). Bell (2004) notes that the federal and provincial governments have acknowledged the lack of success of Canada's Aboriginal students for more than thirty years. Bell goes on to state that when considering Aboriginal student success, a broader perspective than quantifiable knowledge and measurable skills should be addressed, because Aboriginal students require a holistic way of knowing which also supports individual cultural identities (p. 19). Bell describes that the implementation of a broader perspective of a holistic way of knowing/*Snuw'uyulh* is important in the preparation of Aboriginal people's positive participation in the Canadian economic system.

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous/Aboriginal Peoples emphasizes the importance of giving special attention to the rights and needs of Indigenous/Aboriginal women, youth, and children. In particular, the document stresses their right to equality of educational opportunities and access to all levels and forms of education (Armstrong, Derickson, Maracle, & Young-Ing, 1993-1994; United Nations permanent forum on Indigenous issues, 2006). The education of Aboriginal peoples needs to undergo a significant transformation based on an Aboriginal perspective (Battiste, 1999; National Indian Brotherhood, 1972; 1972).

Traditional cultural expressions (or, "expressions of folklore") are integral to the cultural and social identities of indigenous and traditional communities; they embody know-how and skills and they transmit core values and beliefs. As cultural and economic assets, their protection is

linked to the promotion of creativity, enhanced cultural diversity and the preservation of cultural heritage. (World Intellectual Property Organization, n.d.)

The time has come for a bridge to be built that will enable Aboriginal people to maintain an ethnic identity while finding success in a westernized society that constantly encroaches on the Aboriginal sense of identity.

Education is now a focal point in many Aboriginal communities and in academic structures (Mendelson, 2006; Morin, 2004; Society for the advancement of excellence in education, 2005; St. Denis, 2007). There is an under-representation, in the education system, of successful Aboriginal people (British Columbia Ministry of Education, 1998b; M. B. Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; St. Denis & Hampton, 2002). The gap in the success rate between non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal students needs to be addressed and overcome with action (Bates, 2005; Ingnace, 2004; Lawrence, 1978): it is imperative that investigation be undertaken into the methods by which Aboriginal students may become successful in the western educational system (Doige, 2003).

There is a sense of urgency for Aboriginal people to become trained and to be successful candidates in all career opportunities. Sovereign Aboriginal nations need their Aboriginal students to successfully enter into all academic areas. Due to the treaty process, there is a need for Aboriginal people who are properly educated (Bevier, Evenchick, Thompson, & Wyss, 1997). Bevier et al (1997) state that Aboriginal people are moving toward self-government (Dickason, 2003) through the treaty negotiations. This emphasizes that the education of Aboriginal peoples needs to be improved in order that they be self sufficient (Bevier, et al., 1997).

The importance of cultural identity

Cross-cultural psychologists assume that core cultural values define to a large extent what a culture is. Typically, core values are identified through an actual self-importance approach, in which core values are those that members of the culture as a group strongly endorse. (Wan, 2007, p. 337)

Wan (2007) goes on to describe that the values of a culture are the guide to the way in which the members of that culture are to lead their lives. The values are the foundation on which the members base their lives. In keeping with this idea, this thesis describes the importance of the worldview of *Respect/Snuw'uyulh* from a *Hul'q'umi'num'* perspective. It suggests that a balance needs to be developed between this and the western worldview.

Concepts of Respect and respect

There are certain challenges to describing the difference in the two concepts of *Respect* and respect.

- Firstly, when discussing the *Hul'q'umi'num'*/Aboriginal concept for this paper, the word will be capitalized and italicized '*Respect*'.
- Secondly, the western concept will be lower case, 'respect'.
- Thirdly, there is no Aboriginal dictionary to serve as reference for the concept. However, there are three examples of the concepts of *Respect* which will be used to assist in distinguishing the two different cultural concepts of *Respect*/respect. We will refer to a dictionary for the western concept of respect.
- The aim of this thesis is not to argue that one concept or worldview is superior or that one is right and the other is wrong: the aim is merely to

note the differences. This is not to be misunderstood as creating a false dichotomy.

Hul'q'umi'num'/Aboriginal concept of Respect

Respect is the foundation of the *Snuw'uyulh*. Coast Salish author *Sul-hween/Elder* Ellen White describes *Respect*: "... *Respect* for others and their differences and for the power of love. The teachings [*Snuw'uyulh*] show that we are all different but the power of love and commitment transcends all differences" (White Rice, 2006, p. 59). Many Aboriginal peoples hold similar or parallel philosophies regarding the concept of *Respect*. For example, the Alaskan *Sul-hween/Elder*, Kawagley describes *Respect*:

Alaskan Native peoples have traditionally tried to live in harmony with the world around them... a complex way of life with specific cultural mandates regarding the ways in which the human being is to relate to other human relatives and the natural and spiritual worlds. (Kawagley, 1995, p. 8)

Nuu-cha-nulth *Sul-hween/Elder*, Umeek shares:

...the Nuu-cha-nulth word isaak [*Respect*] necessitates a consciousness that all creation has a common origin, and for this reason isaak is extended to all life forms. The mystery of creation has created a network of relationships characterized by isaak... Isaak in practice guides one toward an understanding of creation and its meaning. (Atleo, 2004, pp. 15-16)

The concept of *Respect* in these three examples is complex, a deep-rooted concept or philosophy in the mental, emotional, physical and spiritual aspects. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to define every Aboriginal concept, and so we will focus on *Respect*

and the distinction between the Aboriginal philosophy of *Respect* and the Western concept of respect.

Western concept of respect

The Merriam-Webster online dictionary is an example of the Western society concept of respect:

1: a relation or reference to a particular thing or situation <remarks having *Respect* to an earlier plan> 2: an act of giving particular attention: CONSIDERATION 3 a: high or special regard: ESTEEM b: the quality or state of being esteemed c: plural expressions of respect or deference <paid our respects> 4: PARTICULAR DETAIL <a good plan in some respects> - in respect of chiefly British: with respect to: CONCERNING – in respect to: with respect to: CONCERNING – with respect to: with reference to: in relation to. (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2006-2007)

The western definition of respect discusses consideration, esteem, particular detail, or concern with reference, regard to or in relation to a form of status, a plan, or a thought. The Aboriginal concept of *Respect* discusses the power of love (specifically that *Respect* is based on love which transcends all differences), living in harmony with the world, and awareness that all creation has a common origin and must be *Respected*. These examples demonstrate the difference between the Aboriginal worldview and the western (North American) perspective of respect.

Why is it important to understand the role of Respect/respect in current times?

For many Aboriginal students, the difference between their teachings from home and from the educational system may cause confusion on different levels (Aikenhead, 1997; Armstrong, et al., 1993-1994). When an Aboriginal student enters into a western education system with an Aboriginal worldview, a cultural clash is likely. Often, neither party (teacher or student) has the communication skills nor the vocabulary to describe the chaos (the un-named cross-cultural educational scenario) that then engulfs them. The history lessons in western academia do not refer enough to the effects of the colonization process and the history surrounding the Aboriginal experience of contact and the assimilation that soon followed (Cardinal, 1999; Francis, 1992; Grande, 2004; Mendelson, 2006; Schick & St. Denis, 2005; St. Denis, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). The students and the educators are therefore denied the opportunity to understand.

The assumption here is that many Aboriginal students and Western educators do not understand how to communicate between the two cultures. This highlights a significant difference between the two cultures: an Aboriginal is challenged with worldview conflicts when forced to participate in a western educational system. The tool that I hope to develop in this research project is a way to assist the process of increasing the success rate of Aboriginal students in mainstream society by exploring the importance of their cultural teachings, specifically *Snuw'uyulh*, by teaching from a cultural perspective (Grande, 2004; Trask, 1999). This will increase the self esteem and resiliency of the student, which are integral to the development of a healthy identity.

Limitations of this study

To establish the parameters of this study, it is important to note that this research does not, nor could it, represent all Aboriginal people. It is also important to note that the representation the thoughts on *Snuw'uyulh* of all Coast Salish people would be a huge task that would take many researchers many years. This study will be limited to the teachings and experiences of a group of *Sul-hween/Elders* from the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty Group territory (see Terminology section for description of territory).

There are certain unique conditions that pose limitations to this study.

- The translation of the knowledge from the *Hul'q'umi'num'* language into English may be problematic: the *Sul-hween/Elders* are fluent in their *Hul'q'umi'num'* language and the majority of the focus groups were in various *Hul'q'umi'num'* dialects, which were then translated and transcribed into English,

Research question

The research question is, “What are the greatest concerns of the *Sul-hween/Elders* today regarding *Snuw'uyulh* and how could the *Snuw'uyulh* and the *Sul-hween/Elders'* concerns positively influence *Hul'q'umi'num'* students today?”

Chapter Two: Context of the Study

Introduction

This chapter introduces literature that relates to the concerns regarding the *Sulhween/Elders*. The focus groups (see Chapter Three, Methodology) revealed many categories of concerns. There is a new generation of scholars, Aboriginal scholars and non-Aboriginal who “seek to move the role of Indigenous knowledge and learning from the margins to the center of educational research, thereby confronting some of the most intractable and salient education issues of our times” (Branhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 8). As Branhardt & Kawagley (2005) so eloquently state, an understanding of the Aboriginal perspective would be helpful in making education more meaningful to all students. This will be addressed as well as a snapshot of the history of acculturation and assimilation of Aboriginal people, to display how this impacts the transfer of knowledge today in the Hul’q’umi’num’ society.

A new language needs to be developed so that the worldviews can be communicated and new understandings fostered. The example of *Respect* from a *Hul’q’umi’num’* perspective differs from respect from a western perspective. This difference needs to be recognized, not to suggest that one perspective is right and one is wrong, but to enable dialogue and understanding. “Our challenge now is to devise a system of education for all people that respects the epistemological and pedagogical foundations provided by Indigenous as well as Western cultural traditions” (Branhardt & Kawagley, 2005, p. 10).

The context of the study will:

- draw and outline examples of how European contact and European intention affected Aboriginal people;
- discuss the colonization and assimilation process and how these affected Aboriginal people;
- piece together the historical effects of colonization that contributes to the generational gaps, loss of cultural knowledge or cultural understanding; and
- Discuss the concept and importance of redefining Aboriginal identity from an Aboriginal perspective; as well as, the importance of Aboriginal ways of knowing and cross-cultural education and how this can assist in Aboriginal success and healing through traditional knowledge.

To begin the journey of understanding, we will explore the concept of an Aboriginal worldview.

Worldview

The results of this thesis, and the literature in the context of this study, surround a worldview which is based on the teachings of *Respect of Hul'q'umi'num'* people. This section will discuss the definition of worldview, and how Aboriginal worldviews are described. “[C]ultural worldview is a symbolic social construction that provides a meaningful context in which relatively anxiety-free action is possible” (Solomon, Greenberg, & Pyszczynski, 1991, p. 96). A worldview encompasses conceptions of society: “[t]he conceptions, explicit and implicit, of the society or an individual of the limits and workings of its world” (Haviland, 1997, p. 631).

What is an Aboriginal worldview? The Aboriginal worldview has been developed over thousands of years: “Aboriginal people’s culture is ancient, and certain observations have been made over many millennia about the nature of nature, spirit and being human”(Graham, 1999, p. 105). Graham goes on to explain the basic teachings and principles of the Aboriginal worldview. The laws are based on the fact that the land, not

as property but as the source of life, is sacred; and on the knowledge that each individual is not alone in the world. Each individual comes from a long line of family; kinship remains the strongest tie and does not change. The Aboriginal worldview includes a spiritual interconnectedness to the land and the principles of the worldview are encoded in the Aboriginal language (Marks, 2006; McKinley, 2005; Spittles, 2004).

Aboriginal learning and lecturing as an example

Consequently, there could be no ambiguity of the meaning to the story as the family gathered around the warmth of those ancestral fires. The evenings themselves could become an eternity that was not only timeless, unhurried, and nonlinear, but also spatially motionless. While the storyteller and listeners experienced life without time in their physical bodies, their imaginations engaged with the action found in each story. There is wonder and magic in stories that tell of the exploits and foibles of animal characters. There can be no resistance to lessons found in them because they are indirect. (Atleo, 2004, p. 4)

For Aboriginal people, the significance of the world, worldview and environment are connected physically and spiritually. The setting described by Umeek (2004) is relaxed and comforting; the lessons to be learned are embedded in the story and taken in by the learner. From an Aboriginal perspective, to have a great understanding of spirituality in all aspects of life opens the 'doors' to success in life. For Aboriginal people, the ceremonies assist the weak or the weaknesses of the people, and foster strength within the person/people where it once was lacking (Alfred, 2005).

Aboriginal experience in the education system

The quote below describes the need to understand the experience many Aboriginal people have had in the education system, which in turn affects the socio-economic state of Aboriginal people today.

Anecdotally speaking, I knew in my heart that the few Indians who did survive school accomplished this despite many barriers or whatever politically correct legislation was the popular rhetoric at the time. But in my head I needed to ascertain, scientifically document, and understand the factors that were responsible for this shameful record regarding the education of Native American students and their underrepresentation as professionals within the educational community. (Bowman, 2003, p. 91)

The suppression of the Aboriginal culture through acculturation, assimilation, genocide, potlatch ban and residential school was devastating to the Aboriginal culture and way of life (Miller, 2000; Richardson, 1993; Waldram J.B., 1995). The colonization of Aboriginal people has left behind many obstacles; these obstacles could be understood as the interruption of their traditional worldview.

Rupture in transgenerational transmission

“Cultural discontinuity has been linked to high rates of depression, alcoholism, suicide, and violence in many communities, with the most profound impact on youth” (Kirmayer, Brass, & Tait, 2000, p. 607). Kirmayer, Brass and Tait (2000) go on to state that the process of European colonization is a traumatic history of the Aboriginal population’s destruction by infectious disease, warfare and the aggressive suppression of their culture and identity, which is equivalent to genocide. They note that prior to

European contact the Aboriginal population was approximately seven million; nearly ninety percent of these people died due to direct or indirect European contact. Along with the deceased went much of the precious knowledge that individuals possessed, with no chance to pass it on to the generations to come.

It is helpful to grasp the understanding that there have been several ruptures in the Aboriginal transgenerational transmission of knowledge and communication. The acculturation and assimilation process has fractured Aboriginal societal governance, communication and cultural structure. In this section we will explore some of these topics. The intent is to develop the understanding that on a fundamental level, Aboriginal people may struggle to revitalize cultural ways of knowing because of the ruptures that occurred as a result of colonization. This understanding will encourage dialogue by naming the fracture ‘a rupture in transgenerational knowledge transmission’. I will discuss infectious diseases, the potlatch ban, and the residential school era, while keeping in mind that this is to reveal a truth and may be discomfoting to the reader.

Infectious diseases are a rupture in transgenerational transmission of knowledge for Aboriginal people: small pox as an example

- Why are infectious diseases important to this thesis?

Infectious diseases such as small pox had a high death rate and impacted inter-generational sharing. The survivors of small pox experienced extremely traumatizing psychological effects as a result of the high death toll in their community and family (Carlson K. & K.T. Carlson, 2000; Juneau, 1983). The Aboriginal people did not have immune system to fight the disease (Pfefferbaum, Strickland, Rhoades, & Pfefferbaum, 1995/1996). Carlson and Carlson (2000) exp(Carlson & Carlson, 2000)lain that, in some cases, the introduction of infectious diseases was intentional; for example, blankets

contaminated with smallpox (Friedberg, 2000) were intentionally 'traded' with Aboriginal people. Carlson and Carlson (2000) state that the Aboriginal people had extensive trade routes and communal ceremonies and gatherings. When the blankets were traded to the Aboriginal people, they were in turn traded to other Aboriginal people. Aboriginal people travelled extensively; so did the disease (Stoffle, Jones, & Dobyms, 1995). The incubation period of the disease often allowed for rapid and silent spread of the disease; the traditional Aboriginal healers could not cure the disease (Vernon, 2005). The widespread death across Aboriginal nations was not only devastating to the populations but also the culture and cultural knowledge. The individuals who survived not only had to cope with the great loss of friends, family and community, but also had to cope with the loss of knowledge that died with the individuals who succumbed to their illness (Casken, 2001).

Often, individuals and their families were the keepers of specific integral cultural knowledge. The impact on cultural knowledge fragmented the Aboriginal worldview (Carlson, 2000 ; Duffek, 1999; Pfefferbaum, et al., 1995/1996). "Contact brought with it many forms of depredation, including infectious diseases, among which the great killers were smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, diphtheria, typhus, cholera, scarlet fever, trachoma, whooping cough, chicken pox, and tropical malaria"(Kirmayer, et al., 2000, p. 608).

During first contact and the introduction of infectious diseases (Trigger B.G., 1996), 55-90% of the Aboriginal population died (Vernon, 2005). Those that survived the infectious disease era were then subject to cultural suppression of the Potlatch ban and the residential school era.

Potlatch ban

In this respect, the past is more than something to be recalled and debated intellectually. It has important contemporary and practical implications, because many of the attitudes, institutions and practices that took shape in the past significantly influence and constrain the present. This is most obvious when it comes to laws such as the Indian Act, but it is also evident in many of the assumptions that influence how contemporary institutions such as the educational, social services and justice systems function. (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples [electronic version], 1996)

The Indian Act and the federal government of Canada described the manner in which Aboriginal people were to be viewed and their intention for the envisioned outcome for the Aboriginal people as well:

...viewed Aboriginal people as wards that Indigenous communities and governments were incapable of managing their affairs, that the nation sought eventually to integrate Indigenous cultures into the Canadian mainstream, and that the First Peoples has to be separated from the rest of Canadian society until they were ready for the transition. (Coates, 2008, p. 2)

The Indian Act of 1885 also imposed a Potlatch Ban (Cole, 1991; Jonaitis & Macnair, 1991) which banned spiritual practices; specifically, and most importantly, the potlatch. The potlatch was a complex ceremony for the Tribes of the west coast of British Columbia (Washington, 2004), involving giving away possessions, feasting, and dancing

(Newell & Schreiber, 2006/2007). The act of feasting and dancing marked significant events such as transferring or acknowledging status or traditional names for social and political purposes (Ringel, 1979).

When the ban was enacted in April 19, 1884 (it was simply deleted from the Indian Act in 1951), any participation in or preparation for a potlatch resulted in the confiscation of sacred objects and jail terms of two to six months (U'mista Cultural Centre, 2009). This was a direct attack on the Aboriginal culture (Webster Cranmer, 1990). The Indian Act regulations described:

Every Indian or other person who engages in or assists in celebrating the Indian festival known as the "Potlatch" or the Indian dance known as the "Tamanawas" is guilty of a misdemeanor, and shall be liable to imprisonment for a term not more than six nor less than two months in a jail or other place of confinement. Any Indian or other person who encourages, either directly or indirectly an Indian or Indians to get up such a festival or dance, or to celebrate the same, or who shall assist in the celebration of same is guilty of a like offence, and shall be liable to the same punishment. (U'mista Cultural Centre, 2009, p. webpage)

The potlatch ban was destructive, especially since it interrupted the oral transmission of traditional cultural knowledge (Newell & Schreiber, 2006/2007). The ban was implemented to assist the missionaries in acculturating the Aboriginal people in Christianity. White society used law and institutions (such as schools) to assimilate Aboriginal peoples into western society (Washington, 2004). According to the Indian Act, an Indian was not considered a person until he or she demonstrated to the

superintendent-general of Indian Affairs the degree to which he or she was civilized in the character of integrity, morality and sobriety (Loo, 1992).

The potlatch ban forced continuing supporters of these ceremonies into secrecy (Mauze', 2003). Post-potlatch ban, there is a need to rectify the renewal of knowledge transfer from one generation to the other while dispelling the secrecy code that was necessary during the potlatch ban era (Newell & Schreiber, 2006-2007). However, further complicating the healing process, the potlatch ban occurred at the same time as the Residential school era.

Residential school

The Residential school history is dark and lengthy and, the long era of enforced residential schooling for Indigenous children is now over, its negative impacts of self-concept, parenting, social cohesion, and the intergenerational transmission of language and culture remain. (Ball, 2004, p. 455)

This piece of history includes policies for the assimilation, enculturation or annihilation of Aboriginal people and their culture (de Leeuw, 2007; Stairs, 1994). Aboriginal children experienced rape, discrimination and suffering (Carlson & Carlson, 2000 ; Goodwin, n.d.; Ray, 1996; Simpson, 2004) in the residential school system. The residential school era has had a negative effect on Aboriginal people who are attempting to find success in the dominant society (Morrissette, 2008).

The residential school system was based on a partnership between the federal government of Canada and Christian churches between 1861 and 1984 (de Leeuw, 2007); this school system began to be dismantled in 1969 (DeGagne, 2007). Residential schools

interrupted or severed the structure of the Aboriginal family and culture (Kilpatrick, 2001) and this disruption continues generation after generation. This educational system focused on basic English fluency, the instillation of European values and morals and training in trades, agriculture and domestic arts (Bailey, 2000; Barman, Herbert, & Mccaskil, 1986; Comeau, 1993); the basis of colonization and assimilation.

The residential school was an extreme form of colonization. In this process, the Aboriginal people and their lifestyle were viewed as flawed and inherently inferior (Said, 1994). While the colonizers could potentially have benefitted from the values and philosophies of Aboriginal peoples, they did not take these into account. The colonialists constructed themselves as dominant and more advanced intellectually and culturally (McClintock, 1995), thereby enabling the development of the residential school system and the assimilation of Aboriginals into ‘civilized’ society.

The healing begins

Today, Aboriginal people across Canada are returning to their traditions and basing their healing on traditional knowledge and values in order to reclaim their ethnic identity and power (Kirmayer, Simpson, & Cargo, 2003) and to begin the healing journey from the residential school era (DeGagne, 2007). Kirmayer, Simpson and Cargo describe healing as applying traditional methods of healing based on religious and spiritual ceremonies (Schiff & Moore, 2006). The healing integrates individuals into the family and community, while it also provides individuals with a system of meaning to make sense of their suffering (Kirmayer, et al., 2000). The act of using Aboriginal traditional forms of healing promotes healing for the individual, family, community and nation (Cook, 2005). Healing provides forward momentum; however there is a great effort

required to heal the past colonization, assimilation and genocide efforts of the federal and provincial governments and Christian churches against the Aboriginal people of Canada.

Cultural identity

Today, many Aboriginal communities and organizations are focusing on reviving ancestral ways to confront the history of injustices and suffering brought on by colonization (Weaver, 2001). The reclamation of cultural identity as an Aboriginal individual can be a critical pathway to healing and developing strength, creativity, and resilience (Browne, 2008; Charleston, 1998; Deloria, 1997). Through individual and community-based initiatives as well as larger political and cultural processes, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are involved in healing through their own traditions, repairing the ruptures and discontinuity in the transmission of traditional knowledge and values, and asserting their collective identity and power (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

Aboriginal people need the opportunity and the space to practice their ways of knowing in a meaningful everyday practice; learning their language and engaging in traditional political and spiritual ceremonies will assist and support knowledge of the Aboriginal mind, worldview and perspective (Ball & Simpkins, 2004; Simpson, 2004); merely documenting the knowledge is trivial. Documenting knowledge needs to be accompanied by 'practiced culture' that is deliberate and that helps to make sense of life (Doxtater, 2004).

It is important to understand that in the Aboriginal worldview, knowledge comes from the Creator and from Creation itself. Many stories and teachings are gained from animals, plants, the moon, the

stars, water, wind, and the spirit world. Knowledge is also gained from vision, ceremony, prayer, intuitions, dreams, and personal experience.

(McGregor, 2004, p. 388)

The knowledge of Aboriginal people is intricate and complex, and encompasses many aspects of the individual's life, landscape and environmental relationships (Redpath & Nielsen, 1997). There is no short descriptive answer to describe a philosophy of Aboriginal knowledge (Battiste & Henderson, 2000). Battiste and Henderson (2000) carry on to say that it is misleading to define Aboriginal knowledge in one set definition because Aboriginal peoples vary in societal structures and spiritual practices. However, they share that the conceptualization of Aboriginal knowledge can be encompassed by the relationships between the ecosystem, living beings, spirits, land and the way the Aboriginal people live within those bounds, as well, that this knowledge cannot be separated from the people.

Cross-cultural education

Gaining an understanding of cross-cultural communication will enable the educator to acquire tools to address the issues of cross-cultural education (St. Denis, 2007) by helping them to understand the challenges that face Aboriginal people today (Schick & St. Denis, 2005). For instance, the educated educator should be able to understand issues that face Aboriginal peoples; one step at a time, this could bridge the communication gap between the two cultures, resulting in meaningful cross-cultural education. When cross-cultural education is explored in a meaningful way, a foundation is established to provide remedies for the larger issues of European contact, colonialism,

acculturation, assimilation, race and culture (Lambe J. & J. Swamp, 2002) from an Aboriginal worldview (Adjei, 2007).

There are many issues that face Aboriginal people. One of the top priorities for the United Nations is the education of Aboriginal people. The United Nations has prioritized education as one of the six mandated areas of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (United Nations, 2006). This illustrates and validates discussion of Aboriginal education in the international arena. It is then important to explore meaningful cross-cultural education.

In establishing the context of this study, it is important to take time to explore the importance and benefits of meaningful cross-cultural education. When doing so, one must take into consideration that cross-cultural education involves the student, the student's family and community and the educator (Wotherspoon, 2000). Today, the Aboriginal worldview needs to be clearly understood by Aboriginal children so that they will understand and value themselves, their family, their *Sul-hween/Elders* and their culture (Anderson, 2000; Barman, Hebert, & McCaskill, 1999; Goulet & McLeod, 2002; Michie, 2002). The Aboriginal community needs to have input and a partnership with the academic system with regard to what the Aboriginal child is taught. The community must be able to assist in the development of the educational structure to ensure that Aboriginal content is taught in a respectful informative way (Lafond, 2006).

This section explores cross-cultural education and the ultimate involvement of the teacher and the student. The following is an example of what a child felt entering into a classroom:

On your first day you find that the teachers do not speak your language, in fact, they don't even want you to speak your language – you might be punished by doing so. The teachers don't know anything about your culture – they say “look at me when I speak to you” – but in your culture it may be disrespectful to look at adults directly. Day by day you are torn between two worlds. You look through the many textbooks and find no reflections of yourself or your family or culture. Even in the history books your people are invisible – as if they never exceeded “shadow people” or worse – if your people are mentioned they are mentioned as “obstacles to settlement” or simply as “problems” for your country to overcome. (United Nations, 2006, p. webpage)

Magga (United Nations, 2006), the chairperson of the United Nations' permanent forum on Indigenous issues, shares his experience and feelings in his childhood classroom. The quotation above is a brief example of what Aboriginal students experienced and experience on a daily basis. Sadly, today, many have lost their language and still feel a cultural divide. Aboriginal students are often torn between both worlds and must find a way to balance them. Magga goes on to describe that:

...Children are tough and somehow you survive in this environment.

However, you notice as you reach secondary school that many of your indigenous brothers and sisters have dropped out. Did they fail school or did the school fail them? By senior high school you are the only one left – and the teachers say “but you are not like the others” – but in your heart you know that you are. (United Nations, 2006)

Governments, school systems, educators, and community members face the task of building a bridge that will assist Aboriginal students in participating daily in cross-cultural education (Lafond, 2006; Stairs, 1995).

As an example of the need for cross-cultural education, Aikenhead and Huntley (1999) discuss the concept that western science is a subculture of western society. They argue that the content of science is from a western Eurocentric perspective. A student who has a worldview that is different than that of the dominant society will face cross-cultural education when they participate in a subject such as science (Aikenhead G. & B. Huntley, 1997; Aikenhead G. & O. Jegede, 1999; 1999). A student who is at odds with the curriculum and the worldview that it represents will struggle to find success in school. It is important for educators to take a moment to reflect on this topic as there is a growing population of Aboriginal students in today's classrooms (Berger, Epp, & Moeller, 2006; Department of Education Culture and Employment Northwest Territories (webpage), n.d. ; LeSourd, 1992). There is a benefit to educators who engage in conscious cross-cultural education, but most importantly, the Aboriginal child will gain a rightful respectful place in the classroom (Ball & Simpkins, 2004).

Educators who are aware of cross-cultural education will most likely experience increased confidence in the classroom which will accelerate the success and effectiveness of their teaching methods, heighten career satisfaction, improve professional and personal well-being and establish a commitment to students, school and career. All of these factors will increase opportunity for building connection with community (Aikenhead, 2001; Assembly of Alaska Native Educators, 1999; Cross, 2003; Department of Education Culture and Employment Northwest Territories (webpage), n.d.).

St. Denis (2007), states that “by acknowledging a common experience of colonization and racism, educators can enact solidarity and join together to challenge racism and radicalization” (p. 1087). Both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people play a role in racism and radicalization in the classroom. Working toward cross-cultural education, cross-cultural awareness and an anti-racist educational environment can provide space for everyone in the classroom (Feinstein, 2004; May & Aikman, 2003; Orr & Friesen, 1999). The issues that face Aboriginal students are often not paralleled by those of their non-Aboriginal peers.

Empowering both educators and Aboriginal students with the tools of meaningful cross-cultural education will also open up lines of communication between the educator and the student, the parent and the community. Cross-cultural education might enable the educator to gain understanding and to acquire a deeper meaningful sense of compassion for his/her students and vice-versa, which would contribute to a healthy and safe environment in which to learn and teach. As stated by Ismail (2005), non-Indigenous teachers, not having the experience of being Aboriginal, may not be equipped with the understanding or training to tell the difference in the distortions in the text or experience of the child/student. Ismail goes on to say that in the case of teaching Aboriginal students or Aboriginal content, the non-Aboriginal teacher may stand behind the Aboriginal *Sulhween/Elder* in a supportive position while the Elder becomes a key resource on the topic of meaningful cross-cultural education. Teamwork is essential in understanding and communicating Aboriginal knowledge.

Aboriginal knowledge

While it is difficult to combine all Aboriginal people in one category, there is a large body of academic writing that describes the importance of Aboriginal knowledge. This section is to use academic literature to support the importance of Aboriginal knowledge not to ‘group all Aboriginal’ people together.

Aboriginal knowledge description is used synonymously with traditional and local knowledge to differentiate the knowledge developed by a given community from the knowledge generated through universities, government research centres, and private industry. (Grenier, 1998, p. 101)

Aboriginal Knowledge describes the connection and understanding that Aboriginal peoples have obtained through their relationship with the land (Kimmer, 2002). Kimmer (2002) states that Aboriginal Knowledge exists across the globe unconstrained by ethnicity. Kimmer notes that the basis of Aboriginal Knowledge is the intimate awareness humans have of the land that they occupy; this is based on cultures that are integrated with their landscape for spiritual and material purposes. As Kimmer describes, Aboriginal Knowledge has been developed over generations.

There is a sacred and intimate balance between Aboriginal people, their worldview and the landscape that surrounds them, all of which is sacred and secular (Plenderleith, 2004). The relationship with spirituality and all of creation is important; this relationship describes the worldview and values of the culture. Plenderleith (2004) goes on to say that spirituality is the highest form of consciousness, and that spiritual consciousness is the highest form of awareness.

Many Aboriginal people see themselves as guardians of nature (Branhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Kawagley, 1995; Plenderleith, 2004). This form of thinking transcends many areas of the culture and the individual's attitude toward his/her surroundings and his/her role in the Aboriginal community and cultural societies (Michie, 2002). The sacred and the secular are integral for the creation of a healthy environment that is in many cases a healing, supportive place (Ermine, 1995). Aboriginal people often integrate several healing practices including herbal remedies, ceremonies and rituals that promote spiritual, mental, physical and psychological wellness (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996).

The recent interest in and renewed practice of Aboriginal healing methods has created an increasing interest in non-Aboriginal people in healing from an Aboriginal perspective (Kirmayer L., 2000). Aboriginal healing methods have been recognized as being the most successful for Aboriginal people (American Indian Alaskan Native suicide task force, 1996; American Indian/Alaskan Native suicide task force, 1996; Middlebrook, LeMaster, Beals, Novins, & Manson, 2001; Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, American Indian/Alaskan Native suicide task force, 1996 #105; Schiff & Moore, 2006). This supports the revitalization of the Aboriginal worldview, culture and language.

Aboriginal language and culture

In order to understand the cultural worldview, it is important to explore the knowledge of the Aboriginal people (Ermine, 1995). Aboriginal language is a good starting point for this exploration: "language envelopes culture and codifies thoughts of its people in such an intimate way that it is impossible to separate the two" (Ismail &

Cazden, 2005, p. 89). Aboriginal children must have an understanding of who they are and where they come from; language is instrumental in developing this knowledge. Maintaining culture through language will help to establish an identifiable boundary between Aboriginal culture and western society, giving Aboriginal people a way to express and celebrate their culture and spiritual identity (de Souza M. & R. Rymarz, 2007). The Aboriginal languages are the cultural vessels that holds meaningful communication of cultural values throughout the family and community (King, 2008) and is the basis for Aboriginal sovereignty (Johansen, 2004). Johansen (2004) describes that the language and culture of Aboriginal people hold the governance structure, law and order, land base and spiritual and sacred practices. When the language disappears, these fundamentals become weak or fall apart all together.

Supporting Aboriginal language and culture will encourage Aboriginal people to explore their right to resiliency, which will lead to self-government and self-determination (Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002). Language carries a sense of belonging to family, territory and culture (Watahomigi, 1998), which are complex and in-depth ties to the past (Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer, 1998; Hinton, 1994; Romero, 1994). There is a crucial need to for implementation of language education to produce a foundation on which Aboriginal students may stand and grow (Harrison, 1998).

Summary

- The literature in this chapter illustrates the effects of colonization and its contribution to generational gaps, as well as today's loss of cultural knowledge and cultural understanding. This review discusses the importance of re-defining Aboriginal identity from an Aboriginal perspective. This reveals the importance of Aboriginal ways of knowing. Meaningful cross-cultural education can assist

in the success of Aboriginal people in western society. This chapter also explored the healing of Aboriginal people through traditional knowledge.

This opens the discussion of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* teachings of *Snuw'uyulh'* to assistance in providing the foundation for success in modern times.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Methodology

The social phenomena that was researched and studied for this thesis was the concerns of the *Sul-hween/Elders* with regard to the *Snuw'uyulh* today. After long thought and consideration, a qualitative analysis was chosen for this thesis. Qualitative research happens in a natural setting for the participants: the researcher gathers information and analyses the data while focusing on the meaning for the participants; then describes a process that communicates the results (Creswell, 1998). The specific qualitative analysis that was chosen for this thesis was the grounded theory methodology.

Grounded theory was chosen because it is a way to understand the manner in which people view and comprehend what has happened over time. It exposes groups of information based on the data; it is a method that displays categories, stages and change; and the data is derived directly from interviews with participants (Morse, 2001). Morse (2001) describes grounded theory as a technique that allows the researcher to reveal the participants', *Hul'qumi'num'* Elders, reality.

The data in this research was collected through interviews and participation in focus groups. Focus groups were chosen as a form of data collection because groups are a traditional way for Elders to gather and to discuss issues. The data was recorded on voice recorders and digital visual recordings, which have been described as an ideal method of documentation (Stern & Covan, 2001).

The data analysis began with translating and then transcribing the data. As most of the data recordings were in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* language, a fluent Elder translated the

recordings. After the data was transcribed, memos were inserted into the document. The memos described the way that I would form subcategories within the data.

After the memos were inserted and additional subcategories were identified, the Elders who participated in the research were given copies of the transcriptions to review. A follow-up interview was conducted after they had had time to reflect on their portion of the transcriptions. The Elders were asked to inform me if they wanted to add or omit anything to the interviews. When the final draft of their interviews was constructed, the *Sul-hween/Elders* gave permission for the writing of the thesis to begin.

Transcription of the interviews produced an outline of the concerns regarding the Elders, followed by fifteen subcategories of their greatest concerns. The interviews described what the Elders would like to see done in the future. There were some obstacles in describing the findings portion of the thesis.

The most pertinent obstacle was that academic methodology is based on western academic standards. The greatest challenge in this thesis has been to blend the two worldviews in a manner that is acceptable to academia and that continues to honour the integrity of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* worldview. My hope is that the grounded theory data analysis and the research conducted for this Master's thesis will satisfy the academic, and, most importantly, will allow for the concerns of the *Sul-hween/Elders* regarding the teachings of the *Snuw'uyulh* to be written in the most thoughtful and respectful way, retaining their voice and position on this topic.

Strauss & Corbin (1990) suggest that the literature review might be used as a guide to assist in interpreting the findings in the data; this will help to outline important aspects of the concerns regarding the *Sul-hween/Elders* in this study. The literature

review was conducted post-interview and post-analysis, in the spirit of the grounded theory methodology.

We want to discover relevant categories and the relationships among them, to put together categories in new, rather than standard ways...Also in grounded theory studies, you want to explain phenomena in light of the theoretical framework that evolved during the research itself; thus, you don't want to be constrained by having to adhere to a previously developed theory that may or may not apply to the area under investigation. (Strauss, 1990, p. 49)

As Steve Borgattie's website (n.d.) describes, grounded theory is a methodology that extracts a theory based on the data collected. Borgattie states:

The grounded theory approach, particularly the way Strauss develops it, consists of a set of steps whose careful execution is thought to "guarantee" a good theory as the outcome. Strauss would say that the quality of a theory can be evaluated by the process by which a theory is constructed. (This is a contrast with the scientific perspective that how you generate a theory, whether through dreams, analogies or dumb luck, is irrelevant: the quality of a theory is determined by its ability to explain new data.). (Borgatti, n.d., p. webpage)

By using grounded theory in this thesis, we can understand the concerns regarding the *Sul-hween/Elders* with regard to the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* today. The transcribed focus group interviews were compared to and supported by other data (see: Chapter Four: Context of this Study); constant comparison is the basis of the process (Dick, 2005). The

importance of the data collected in the focus group interviews is supported by topics explored in Chapter Two, Context of this Study, such as: infectious disease and its impact on Aboriginal people; the residential school era; cultural identity; issues facing educators and Aboriginal students in academic systems; Aboriginal knowledge and Aboriginal language and culture. By and large, this research methodology was designed around the work of Strauss (1990). Strauss' methodology is well-known for its usefulness in areas such as sociology, nursing, education, social work, and organizational studies ("Anselm Strauss: Anselm Strauss on Interaction," n.d.).

Grounded theory methodology analyses data through a number of procedures (Strauss, 1990); these are summarized below. This summary was closely followed as a guide to data analysis for this thesis.

- Open coding is the part of the analysis concerned with identifying, naming, categorizing and describing phenomena found in the data.
- Axial coding is the process of relating codes (categories and properties) to each other via a combination of inductive and deductive thinking. (The aim of axial coding is to simplify this process; grounded theory focuses on causal relationships and fits things into a basic framework of generic relationships).
- Selective coding is the process of choosing one category to be the core category, and relating all other categories to that category.
- Memos or short documents were used to document my thoughts and to note literature that relates to the data analysis process. The memos were inserted into the documents and provided the foundation for the larger portion of the data analysis.

The basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques

Strauss' perspective on grounded theory (Strauss, 1990) was used as a guide for deriving the theory for the *Sul'hween/Elder's* greatest concerns with regard to the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* today. The theory was based on the words of the *Sul-hween/Elders*. The information used to explain these concerns came directly from the *Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in this research. Grounded theory was determined to be the best fit for this type of research, because this form of data analysis would assist in explaining the concerns regarding the *Sul-hween/Elders* today, while honouring the *Sul-hween/Elders* who provide a precious wealth of knowledge.

Participants, location and questionnaire

The focus groups were conducted in a boardroom of the Chemainus First Nations band office in Ladysmith, BC. The goals of the focus groups were not only to discuss the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* but to give the participants the opportunity to share this knowledge in their traditional *Hul'q'umi'num'* language. For this purpose, the chair of the focus group was a fluent speaker of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* language. The primary investigator was present to help set up the room and was present during the focus group. As the participants utilized their traditional language, a translator was hired to translate the focus group discussions into English. The primary investigator then transcribed the discussion. The focus group discussions were recorded in both audio and video media.

I am the University of Victoria project coordinator for the Community University Research Alliance (CURA): Coast Salish language revitalization multi media research grant, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. There are a number of language revitalization research projects in the University of Victoria

CURA grant, one of which is titled “*Snuw’uyulh*”. The goals of “the *Snuw’uyulh* project” and this thesis are so similar that a partnership was formed with the CURA. The participants are the 8 *Sul-hween/Elders* who have contributed to the *Hul’q’umi’num’* Treaty group portion of the CURA research projects and who live within the *Hul’q’umi’num’* Treaty group territory. These specific *Sul-hween/Elders*, in consultation with the CURA team, have requested an addition to the “*Snuw’uyulh*” project, to help Aboriginal students’ at all academic levels to develop an understanding of the cultural teachings, to identify the need for cultural roots to develop tools and skills for their lives today.

The Elders who participated in the focus group ranged in age from mid-sixties to mid-eighties. The majority of the Elders attended Residential schools; all of the Elders are active in cultural societies in the *Hul’q’umi’num’* Territory. All of the Elders who participated in this research requested that someone do ‘something’ about *Snuw’uyulh*. All of the Elders have stipulated that they want to share the *Snuw’uyulh* with the younger generations.

The question for the focus group was developed by the primary investigator in consultation with the *Sul-hween/Elder* who is fluent in the *Hul’q’umi’num’* language. Originally, there were several questions, and they were thought to be too verbose. In the end, it was decided that only one question would be asked: “what is your greatest concern about the *Snuw’uyulh* today?” This question covered all of the *Snuw’uyulh* and could be easily translated into *Hul’q’umi’num’*.

The participants were compensated partially through funding from the Community University Research Alliance. The Elders who participated in this research

wished to use their true names; their wish was not to hide their identity as they are sharing their truth: Arvid Charlie, Gus Joe, Mary-Ellen Joe, Bernard Joe, Angus Smith, Ed Seymour and Willie Seymour.

Reliability and validity

In this research, the Sul-hween/Elders', who participated in the focus groups, are Sul-hween/Elders who are highly involved in many aspects of the Hul'q'umi'num' society; they have skills that are associated with: all of the topics that they covered in the findings and results sections of this thesis. They all have apprentices at various stages of learning. The validity of this project is based on the rich knowledge that the Sul-hween have; which was passed down to them by their Elder's. They are the experts in the various traditions that they specialize in, in their Hul'q'umi'num' traditional ways.

Chapter Four: “Findings” in the Words of the *Sul-hween/Elders*; their Greatest Concerns Regarding the *Snuw’uyulh* Today

Introduction

The *Hul’q’umi’num’ Sul-hween/Elders* shared their concerns with regard to *Snuw’uyulh/Respect*. Only one question was asked of every focus group: “what is your greatest concern regarding the *Snuw’uyulh* today?” The *Hul’q’umi’num’ Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in the focus groups covered a vast area of the Coast Salish worldview.

By no means does the information in this chapter address all of the *Hul’q’umi’num’ Snuw’uyulh*. As there are degrees in academia, there are degrees of *Snuw’uyulh*: what the *Sul-hween/Elders’* shared were the common teachings of *Snuw’uyulh*. The information in this chapter is a snapshot of the *Snuw’uyulh*. As the *Snuw’uyulh* covers much more complex and intricate topics, to document all of the *Snuw’uyulh* would require many lifetimes of dedicated labour. The discussion in this chapter provides an introduction to illustrate the fundamental teachings of the *Snuw’uyulh*. The *Sul-hween/Elders* wish to encourage the younger generation’s curiosity, to enable them to seek out an in-depth understanding of *Snuw’uyulh* from the *Sul-hween/Elders* in their own communities. The hope of the *Sul-hween/Elders* is that the younger generations can and will base their lives on the valuable teachings of *Snuw’uyulh*. The words printed on these pages are based on the concerns and passion of the *Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in this project. This chapter has been reviewed, corrected and approved by a *Sul-hween/Elder* who participated in the discussions around this thesis and only with his permission has it been released for the general population to read.

The grounded theory methodology data analysis revealed themes that arose during the focus groups. The *Sul-hween/Elders* have specific concerns regarding the younger generation's ability to:

- listen to and believe the *Snuw'uyulh*;
- value the *Snuw'uyulh* in general;
- see the value of the *Snuw'uyulh*, in their life today; and
- Follow the *Snuw'uyulh* as a means to a healthier, holistic lifestyle.

In the following pages, I provide a brief description of the setting and environment for the focus groups. Coffee, tea, milk and sugar (or sugar substitute) was made available in the boardroom and offered to the *Sul-hween/Elders* upon arrival; snacks and a hot meal were provided during the day. Leather office chairs were spaced around a table.

W. Seymour, the chairperson opened the meeting by asking *Sul-hween/Elder*, M. Joe, for an opening prayer; he then introduced the reasons for gathering together and asked the question, "What are your greatest concerns regarding *Snuw'uyulh* today?" This question prompted discussion of how the *Sul-hween/Elders* were raised.

They remembered that their parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents were their teachers of *Snuw'uyulh* and that the *Snuw'uyulh* of their teachers had come from their teachers' parents, aunts and uncles, grandparents and great-grandparents. They shared that because the *Snuw'uyulh* was passed down a long line of generations, the *Snuw'uyulh* was not theirs to own. They were to pass on the *Snuw'uyulh* as it has always been. The greatest concerns of the *Hul'q'umi'num' Sul-hween/Elders* regarding the *Snuw'uyulh* today are outlined below.

- Bringing back the teachings of the *Snuw'uyulh*;
- The meaning of the teachings of the *Snuw'uyulh*;

- The attitude of the younger generations toward *Sul-hween/Elders*;
- Obstacles in the way of teaching *Snuw'uyulh* today;
- Drugs and alcohol as an obstacle in teaching *Snuw'uyulh* today;
- Colonization as an obstacle in teaching *Snuw'uyulh* today;
- Grief from having lost the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh*;
- The importance of the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh*;
- Unity/communication/family protocol as a basis of *Snuw'uyulh*;
- Parenting and *Snuw'uyulh*;
- Puberty and *Snuw'uyulh*;
- Grief, death and *Snuw'uyulh*;
- The *Ta't Mustimuwh*/Ancestors.

Bringing back the teachings of Snuw'uyulh

When the *Sul-hween/Elders* talked about bringing back the teachings, they expressed many feelings, especially the heartfelt desire that the younger people might gain an understanding of *Snuw'uyulh*. They wished that the younger people might begin to truly value a worldview that has existed since the beginning of time for the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. The conversations brought back many memories of yester-year (see terms for definition) for them, memories of being a small child, a youth, an adolescent, a young adult, an adult and finally the stage of life in which the *Sul-hween/Elders* find themselves today. A concern Gus Joe has is that:

The kids are the ones who will take your place. This is why the teaching of everything is that important. The kids have to know all of the teachings, the words and the importance.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* were greatly concerned that the younger people today are missing much of the worldview in the teachings of the *Snuw'uyulh*. They felt, uneasily, that the younger generations need more preparation for what waits for them in the future.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* are well aware of the issues that face their people. Willie Seymour states that "...if we can find a way, any small way to begin to make change; this is our contribution to the rest of society." The *Sul-hween/Elders*, with all of their wisdom and experience, understand clearly that the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* are a valuable tool by which to live life.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* gather in many other community forums, such as those in a Bighouse (where the winter ceremonies take place) or at funerals or community gatherings. During this time they encourage each other to speak publicly about the *Snuw'uyulh*, with the hope that the audience will understand that "one day, [they] will find out that what we are talking about is true". The *Snuw'uyulh* is true and worth understanding.

Willie, one of the Elders from our focus groups, is concerned that the people are, "...running short of the words of *Snuw'uyulh*." Angus Smith, another Elder, would like to see that more of the teachings are shared: "This is why I am asking to please help me, to put down the good word of the teachings." Angus goes on to say "...go back! To the way the *Sul-hween/Elders* were a long time ago, go back, don't throw it away. Don't be like that! I am fortunate to be where I am at today."

Angus lives his life to the fullest, based on the *Snuw'uyulh* of his *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*. Angus acknowledges and understands that many parents today are lacking in the knowledge of the *Snuw'uyulh*, and he acknowledges that it is okay to learn along with the children. Mary-Ellen Joe also recognizes that there are young people in the communities who want to learn about *Snuw'uyulh*: "...there are some young people that I am really proud of. You know, I can see what they are doing; they are trying."

The fact that there are young people who are willing to learn gives the *Sul'hween/Elders* hope that the teachings will live on; to assist the new generations through the trials of life. The *Sul'hween/Elders* understand that there are many obstacles that face the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. Willie states that “it’s always been on my mind that you could get it back. It is yours to use, it is very good!” The *Snuw'uyulh* can help if time is set aside to learn and to understand the concepts. He addresses youth: “...make up your mind that you are going to be strong people, you are not small”, “not small” meaning in status and value. The *Snuw'uyulh* teaches self worth and self confidence. The *Sul'hween/Elders* are saying that the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people are precious and valuable; this leads them to the meaning of *Snuw'uyulh*.

Meaning of the teachings of Snuw'uyulh

Willie shares that “the task before us, I think, is going to be one of the bigger tasks that we have done. I really believe that this is where the key to our successes are.” This quote describes how important the *Snuw'uyulh* is. Willie shares the *Snuw'uyulh* metaphor, “...in all the branches of the tree are the branches or our way of life. Every branch has its own sacredness and has its own contribution to the whole society”. The *Snuw'uyulh* has many meanings and rules for life, and is the foundation or the roots that the tree must have. The branches contain the many aspects of the *Snuw'uyulh* truths and rules for life. All of the aspects of the *Snuw'uyulh* are interconnected and relate to create a whole being. The holistic individual is well-rounded, mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

The *Snuw'uyulh* teachings have been passed down from one generation to another. As Angus said, “*Snuw'uyulh* was from the old people that were from the old

precious people, it was big to get the *Snuw'uyulh* from the old people, and it was an honour. *Snuw'uyulh* was a big word with much meaning.” Many of the teachings were conveyed to the *Sul-hween/Elders* through watching and learning. Bernard Joe shares the following example of the educational method used by the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*:

A young man was taught how to build a canoe by his grand-uncle who ...was building a canoe; [the grand-nephew] wanted to go and help. The old man told him ‘no, you just go and sit on that log and watch’”. Later, when the grand-uncle had passed away and the young man found himself needing a new canoe, he got the idea to build the canoe based on what he saw his late grand-uncle do. The same young man became one of the key canoe builders for his community.

The art of teaching and learning from a *Hul'q'umi'num'* traditional perspective is not complicated. A healthy learning environment requires trust, patience and attention to detail. The *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* believed that the student could develop skills and talents with commitment and time spent with teachers. The actions of the student were, and are, considered a reflection of the teacher, and vice-versa. They had confidence in the youth of yester-year and there was an interconnected and intimate relationship between student and teacher. The *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* encouraged the greatest possible understanding of what was being taught while fostering a meaningful relationship to deepen the learning experience. Both the teacher and the student had *Respect* for each other; this created a safe environment for both in which to function. To understand, teach and learn *Snuw'uyulh* is to gain an understanding of *Respect* and its relationship with all that surrounds us.

What the Sul-hween/Elders think about the attitude that the younger generation has toward them

There is constant concern amongst the *Sul-hween/Elders* that the young people today do not want to listen, or, as Mary-Ellen expresses, “they do not understand. They go out and do what they want to do.” The Elders notice that the youth today leave and don’t listen anymore. When the *Sul-hween/Elders* preach and lecture, as Willie shares, “...sometimes I become the bad guy.” Willie also shares that “you can’t talk to the young people because they use their own will.” the *Sul-hween/Elders* wonder how long it will take to bring back the teachings and restore the *Snuw’uyulh*. Often, when the *Sul-hween/Elders* bring out or reveal the *Snuw’uyulh*, the young get upset and don’t want to listen to the teachings. The disinterest and attitude described by the *Sul-hween/Elders* creates a trans-generational barrier in communicating the *Snuw’uyulh*. Thomas shares that often, the *Sul-hween/Elders* who still publicly teach the *Snuw’uyulh* feel that they “...can’t talk to the children nowadays...[we] talk to them, they go home, they talk to the parents and they get mad.” This creates a trans-generational communication gap that can be overcome, with dedication from all parties, which the Elder’s express support for. A bridge needs to be built so that the three different generations can communicate in an effective way.

There are young people who are interested in bringing back the *Snuw’uyulh*. They often return to the *Sul-hween/Elder* to verify that they are using the teachings in a correct manner. The *Sul-hween/Elders* thereby derive the hope that they will have avenues to leave the *Snuw’uyulh* for future generations.

Obstacles in teaching Snuw'uyulh today

The *Sul-hween/Elders* were taught the *Snuw'uyulh* through the oral culture of their *Ta't Mustimuwah/Ancestors*. The younger generations today are trained through western academic structures, which are most often written and are communicated in English. The *Sul-hween/Elders* and the younger generations are communicating through different sets of tools; customs have changed and now the tools of the younger generations need to be utilized in order to restore communication. This trans-generational communication gap creates difficulty in the Bighouse: Gus shares that “there is nothing now...there is nothing that comes out of the teachings of the Bighouse the way it was supposed to be.”

Gus also shares that some Elders, though versed in *Snuw'uyulh* “...do not let it out. I only wish they [would]. That is why our young people are in trouble all the time. Because we never talk to them, never caution them”. It is difficult and discouraging for *Sul-hween/Elders* to share the strict rules of life with the younger generations if, over and over, the young close themselves off to the philosophy of the *Snuw'uyulh*. Gus states that “...sometimes I hear our relatives say... we lost our teachings. No way! We never lost the teachings. *Sul-hween/Elders*, we just have to bring it out.” Willie adds that it is a “...difficult era we are in.” There are many issues that face the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people, including suicide, drugs and alcohol.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* are concerned about suicide. They remember that the *Ta't Mustimuwah/Ancestors* never heard of suicide from their teachers of *Snuw'uyulh*; the Elders used to make examples out of individuals who committed suicide. Willie remembered a time when suicide was first introduced, “...there was a suicide [on a

reserve in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* territory]. I was just a little boy. My grandfather called everybody together and said, don't ever think you want to copy that or repeat that!"

The strong cultural belief is that an individual who commits suicide would not make it to the afterlife or spirit world. If a loved one 'followed' the individual who committed suicide, they would end up in a dark world just as the person they followed. Willie states that this dark world "...may be more tragic than the one [that the follower is in] right now." In the old days, the community was never allowed memorials for someone who took their own life; historic *Snuw'uyulh* disciplines were that strict. In yester-year, there was a strong communication and support network to rely on. This network was based on the *Hul'q'umi'num' Snuw'uyulh*, which made no allowance for the reasons that an individual may use to attempt or commit suicide.

Communication amongst the family unit and extended family was an important component of the *Snuw'uyulh*, especially when it came to organizing family events such as naming and memorials. Naming and memorials are significant components of the *Hul'q'umi'num' Snuw'uyulh* teachings. Often, *Sul-hween/Elders* witness today that there are conflicts in the planning stage of cultural events. Family members often feel that they were not consulted and a clashing of wills ensues. Willie speaks of the meaning of the ceremony being lost: "... it is now [based on] 'what I am going to do to satisfy me'. That is what happens; the feelings come from the wrong place." Historically, all family members were included and followed the protocols of the family/community structure. Today there is a fundamental communication breakdown, a gap that the *Sul-hween/Elders* would like to see overcome.

Drugs and alcohol as obstacles in teaching Snuw'uyulh today

The *Sul-hween/Elders* have great concerns about the use of drugs and alcohol. They witness the extent to which both drugs and alcohol affect their families, community, and culture. *Sul-hween/Elders* lecture, preach and caution the people on the tragedy that consumes the community because of the use of drugs and alcohol. As Gus says:

... It's the drinking and the smoke that they take that is bad, and that is what I told them. There was a young guy that just died, they buried him. I heard that he was using that smoke that caused his death. I told the people in [a community in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* treaty group area], 'if you take that smoke all the time, something bad will happen to those that smoke and drink.' Someone went to jail for 5-10 years, second degree murder, but he did not know that he did it because of the drugs and liquor.

Marijuana, other drugs and alcohol that cause harm to self, family and community. When someone dies or is tragically hurt due to the use of drugs and alcohol, the *Sul-hween/Elders* can see that it affects all of the people in the family.

Gus cautioned that "if you keep on drinking, then you will find yourself in trouble; you pushed too far and can't come back to where you were. There are a lot of our people that get hurt. That comes from the smoke and the liquor."

Angus elaborates that when you have gone too far and you can't come back, you have lost control of yourself and you can't take back the actions you provoked. When one loses control of him or herself while under the influence of drugs and alcohol, it's not unusual that people are hurt; the *Sul-hween/Elders'* see this as needless and avoidable

trauma. The power of addiction is strong and presents a significant complication when striving to bring back the *Snuw'uyulh*. Gus, having seen individuals smoking drugs, said:

I told them to stop smoking and I said it to them again. They did not listen, they did not listen. I tried to tell them but he did not listen. There was a boy that died; it was all because of the bad cigarette and bad liquor. There was another one that killed someone.

By “pushing too far past, and you can’t come back”, Gus and Angus mean that when tragedy such as accidental death, murder, suicide or serious injury results from drug and alcohol use, the implicated individual(s) can’t come back to the way they were before they did drugs or used alcohol. Life will never be the same. They can’t come back as the person they were before. The *Sul-hween/Elders* have an in-depth understanding of the consequences of such actions and it causes them great grief and concern.

Mary-Ellen shares her experiences with addiction: “because alcohol took over my parents’ life, they were not around.” When this *Sul-hween/Elder* was a child, she says,

...my parents had these people at the house and this one person was feeling good [intoxicated], and saw I and my two brothers. He pointed to us and said, ‘oh, you will all be drunks too when you grow up!’ ...I never forgot that, I said ‘no way, I will show him!’ So I did, I never ever drank.

The conviction and desire that this *Sul-hween/Elder* had to abstain from the use of alcohol is honourable. To be so young and be given the message that ‘you will all be drunks too’ can damage a child’s psychology, specifically his or her outlook on the world

and environment. It leaves one to wonder how many others Aboriginal children have been given similar messages and how many believed it?

A *Sul-hween/Elder* who struggles with alcohol addiction shared a particularly poignant experience after the death of loved ones. The grief brought him to the streets of a large city for three weeks. He did not know where he was and was totally lost in grief while his family was looking for him. He was lying down in Vancouver's Cathedral Park in January. He had a thin blanket that he had found to keep him warm. His late grandfather came to him in his dream and asked, "What is the matter? I told you that I would never leave you. If you are walking, I am walking alongside you. That is all now; you have got to go home." The vision and words of his grandfather gave him the strength to begin the long journey home. The effects of alcohol had obscured his thoughts, actions and feelings.

Willie shares another example of what may happen under the influence:

It will make you say things and do things to your best friend that is inappropriate. You will find yourself in trouble when you come back with a clear mind. But most importantly, don't come home in a different state. In other words, don't come home in a casket.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* are concerned about the death rate associated with the use of drugs and alcohol. Time and time again they are bombarded with the grief of losing another young person in one of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* Treaty group territories. "... A young man was killed. That vehicle was split right in half" (Willie Seymour), due to reckless driving, speeding while under the influence of alcohol. The potential of the young man

and his future is gone and the *Sul-hween/Elders* grieve for the young man, for his family and for his community.

Ed Seymour describes that he “learned three months ago that [a youth] is already taking that smoke. He lies to get money from me”. Trust is broken, communication is lost. How does a youth regain a *Sul-hween/Elder’s* trust and how does a *Sul-hween/Elder* begin to teach *Snuw’uyulh*, when such strong outside influences are altering the situation? The use of drugs and alcohol have had a lasting impact on the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people and pose a significant obstacle in bringing back the sacred *Snuw’uyulh*.

Colonization as an obstacle to teaching Snuw’uyulh today

Another significant obstacle in revitalizing the sacred teachings of *Snuw’uyulh* is colonization. The *Sul-hween/Elders* acknowledged the effects of colonization on the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people. They discussed the residential school era and government policy which lead to dependency. When the government placed restrictions on the lifestyle of the traditional *Hul’q’umi’num’* peoples, it created a dependency for the people on the government system. Bernard shares that “a long time ago, there was no family allowance, there was no welfare. [The people] would go digging [for clams]... They never used to get money from the government.” The people were self-sufficient and able to provide for and take care of themselves, utilizing the land that surrounded them. This supported the *Snuw’uyulh* teachings of the interconnected relationship of everything in the environment.

The western influence on the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people has created a fraction within the individual. Angus shares that,

You are split in half. Half would take half and the other half would take the other half [the *Hul'q'umi'num'* mind or worldview]... Your first enemy is the government. He put down the first words in [the] mission and he told the Indians, 'if you don't fix the church and the school, we are going to do away with ALL of you.' ...The people rushed and fixed the school and they fixed the church.

This is a brief synopsis that describes the implementation of the colonization and assimilation processes. Fear, the foundation of churches and residential schools, created a 'split' in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* mind. The act of building the church and the school in Angus's story paved the way for the implementation, by the government, of the residential school era. Angus adds that, "They hear you speak one word in Indian, slap, slap, and slap! You get a strapping! They hurt; break up the mind, the kids mind, hammered right into you", impeding the thoughts and feelings as a *Hul'q'umi'num'* individual.

Today, residential schools are closed. The residual effects, however, may last for generations; especially as the influence of western society is ever-present and ever impacting the younger generations today. The educational system, welfare system and child protection agencies have taken over many roles from the residential school system. In yester-year, adults parented without question, having the ability and confidence to raise their young. Implementation of the many systems that govern western society and the dysfunctional relationship between *Hul'q'umi'num'* people and the government has created a mistrust; not only between the two worldviews, but within the *Hul'q'umi'num'* family structure.

Arvid Charlie describes that he was raised in an environment where hazards were a natural part of life: whether cooking with an open fire, canoeing or playing by the water, the child needed to listen to the parent. If the child 'did what he wanted to do,' his actions would have had grave repercussions. Burns, drowning, or fatal accidents would have occurred on a regular basis. The *Sul-hween/Elders* of yester-year took great care to prevent accidents and to secure the life of their children. The parents of yester-year needed to be keenly aware of environmental influences and hazards; one mistake could cause the child's life. In some families, children would have been disciplined for reckless action.

Today, to discipline a child could mean a phone call to an agency such as Child Welfare. Agencies such as Child Welfare have good intentions and have been established for good reason; the following is no criticism of their origins and of the good work that they do. However, with the harsh governmental history associated with the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people, there is a paranoia that impedes responsible discipline of children by parents and grandparents. Ed describes teasing a child in his community, who was about ten or eleven years old at the time:

...They were getting in trouble. So, I started teasing them; 'I think it is better if spanking came back.'...Like our dad used to do to us -it did not bother me or anything- I knew that he was just trying to teach me something. But I said that to [the child], he says, 'yeah? Go ahead, hit me..., you do that I will tell my teacher or I will tell the welfare.' That is what they have over us, our kids. Lots of them say that, 'tell my teacher

or the welfare if you hit me. You guys will be in trouble!’ That is what they said. So it is really hard to talk to our children anymore.

To a residential school survivor and a survivor who carries the scars of racism, the above conversation with a ten-year-old would be alarming because of the oppression and abuse by authority figures during the residential school era and the time of the Indian Agents. In this scenario, an obstacle was created in parenting, trans-generational communication and sharing of the *Snuw’uyulh*. Such an innocent conversation created a fracture and mistrust in the family structure. In this case, it affected three generations: the child, the parents and the grandparents. In this scenario, one could ask, “who has the power and who has the control over the parenting, the environment, decisions made in the family and authority?” The child does. This is backwards, unproductive, and any family with this power dynamic will not be able to function in a healthy way. Mistrust removes the opportunity for the child to gain the knowledge of *Sul’hween/Elder* who apart from teasing him truly wanted to teach the child *Snuw’uyulh*.

Teenagers face dilemmas on many different levels. On-going colonization and western influence is evident and is literally everywhere. The *Sul’hween/Elders’* are concerned about cultural protocol, spirituality and the *Hul’q’umi’num’* worldview because families are:

- surrounding the TV rather than the dinner table where *Snuw’uyulh* is traditionally shared;
- listening to modern music and play modern instruments, which does not create the opportunity to share the songs and dances of the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people; and
- Spending time texting and chatting on the telephone or using computers and mp3 players and don’t take the time to share their culture with their *Sul’hween/Elders*.

The generational gap is growing larger and larger as time and technology advance. The time consumed by these activities removes the opportunity to spend time with the *Sul-hween/Elders* in the family who are the carriers of *Snuw'uyulh*. The *Sul-hween/Elders* grieve the opportunities that slip away.

Grief from losing the teachings of Snuw'uyulh

There is great grief when the *Sul-hween/Elders* speak of the *Snuw'uyulh*. When conducting this type of research, we are brought back to days, months, and years gone by, “yester-year.” As life progresses and we evolve and mature through the various stages of life, we leave behind homes, people and pieces of ourselves. As we all reflect on our childhood, we remember that special person who was larger than life or the universe. It is an honour that the *Sul-hween/Elders* shared their personal experiences and, specifically, sharing memories of the people that they love so dearly who now walk in the afterlife. The *Sul-hween/Elders* balance the grief of losing those significant people with their dedication and loyalty to the *Snuw'uyulh*. As Willie says, “it has hurt me to go back like that because my family was strong people. I grew up with my grandfather. It hurt me because I would go back and start to think about my grandparents.”

Knowing the *Ta't Mustimuw/Ancestors*, how they carried themselves and how independent they were, evokes emotion in the generations that follow, specifically the *Sul-hween/Elders* of today. The footsteps that the Elders follow are hard to fill at times, especially when the *Sul-hween/Elders* of today are bombarded by the ripple effects of colonization, drugs and alcohol, the generational gap that interferes with transferring the *Snuw'uyulh* to the younger generations, and the tragedy of young lives being taken so senselessly. The *Sul-hween/Elders* are the ones that get up and speak during funerals

while often experiencing grief themselves; Arvid states that “it is hard, it is hard... always trying to find a way”. This *Sul-hween/Elder* found comfort in the discussions around *Snuw’uyulh*, finding in that support a foundation that is ever stronger than before.

A balance between the *Snuw’uyulh* and the time and events of colonization and western influence needs to be found. In the past, the rules of life or the *Snuw’uyulh* were strict and everything had meaning. Willie reflects on the attempt to transfer the knowledge to the younger people: “today, we accommodate... young people; good intentions get in the way of *Snuw’uyulh*. You mean well, but it is not our teaching, that good intention gets in the way of the true truths.”

It is understandable to ‘water down’ the teachings when trying to find the balance between welcoming in the younger people and transferring some understanding of the worldview of the *Snuw’uyulh*; but the *Sul-hween/Elders* say that it is not the *Hul’q’umi’num’* way.

The importance of the teachings of Snuw’uyulh

The *Snuw’uyulh* is the rules of life that guide the individual through hard times and teach the individual to appreciate the good times; they are skills on which to base your life. The *Snuw’uyulh* are tried, tested and proven true by those who follow them. As Willie says,

...there is a reason why we are here; there is a reason why we are brought together. I really believe that. Because I was sharing with my uncle and my aunts when I am in situations like this, sometimes it is my comfort; ...it brings me back to my grandfather.

The *Snuw'uyulh* of the *Hul'q'umi'num' Sul-hween/Elders* is, in-depth and beautiful. The mere discussion of *Snuw'uyulh* brings the spokesperson back to times long gone. At times, those memories evoke tears and with that the *Sul-hween/Elders* gain a deeper understanding and meaning of *Snuw'uyulh*. An individual, no matter the age is always gaining an understanding of *Snuw'uyulh* at different levels. The 'tough love' of *Snuw'uyulh* also requires that an individual heal mentally, emotionally and spiritually from the grief of the death of loved ones. The *Ta't Mustimuw/Ancestors* of the *Hul'q'umi'num' Sul-hween/Elders* did not make the rules of *Snuw'uyulh* easy but they were straightforward. The *Snuw'uyulh* from the *Ta't Mustimuw/Ancestors* enabled the individual to find a path which invited and challenged the individual to become a whole human being. Angus shares that "...it is right, nowadays; our words are precious."

The *Snuw'uyulh* and the life skills imbedded within it are interconnected and detailed. For instance, parents may benefit and find ease in knowing that the *Snuw'uyulh* is there to help them raise their child (ren). The *Snuw'uyulh* explains the difference between good and bad; as an Elder, Gus tells the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people to be careful and how to take care of themselves. It is extremely important that the *Snuw'uyulh* be shared; it is not lost if it is repeatedly expressed. Often the *Snuw'uyulh* describes to the listener 'how to be' and 'how to carry oneself,' referring to characteristics, behaviours, spiritual practices, self-esteem, self-worth and self-care.

The *Hul'q'umi'num'* people have sacred societies that conduct spiritual ceremonies. The *Snuw'uyulh* that accompanies these societies governs how the individual is to live his or her life and represent his or her society and family. It teaches the individual to look after him- or her and the society that they belong to. The teachings

show us how to be generous with each other, not only within the family but also in the community; when taught from a young age, generosity comes without question. Imagine a community that is structured around such a simple philosophy and how kind it would be! Mary-Ellen says that “there are a lot of sacred things going on. When you are told something, you have to do it; if you don’t, then that is bad. That is why there is always trouble”, when the *Snuw’uyulh* is not acted upon.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* believe that it is crucial to bring back the *Snuw’uyulh* in order to help address the issues facing the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people today. Spiritual practices are important to the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people, as spirituality is not only a way of life but also a connection to the afterlife.

Unity, communication and family protocol as a basis for Snuw’uyulh

The *Snuw’uyulh* brought a sense of unity, as it expected and required the clear communication that outlined family protocol. These protocols may differ slightly between communities or families themselves but the *Snuw’uyulh* provided structure for the community and society based on *Respect*.

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* of yester-year used to gather and visit each other. When they did, a meal would be prepared: often, horse clams and little necks would be put on the fire to cook. Bernard shares that the *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* of yester-year would discuss with each other the importance of the teachings of the *Snuw’uyulh*. Arvid shared that they would plan, or bring out their concerns about any given topic. This displays support, unity, open communication and family protocol.

What is important about unity and open communication? Unity is inclusive; every individual belongs to the group. The times of yester-year required open communication

and everything was discussed. What was discussed? *Snuw'uyulh* was discussed with every member of the family or group from the youngest to the oldest. Everyone had a role, a job, a place in the family and community structure.

Family protocol is an important aspect of *Snuw'uyulh*. As one can imagine, a nation with tight-knit communities would be connected through family ties; this posed a challenge when finding an appropriate spouse. Due to previous marriages within the *Hul'q'umi'num'* territory, many were too closely related to be espoused. One strict family protocol was to know your family history. Anyone who has fallen in love, especially for the first time, will understand the desire and 'need' to be with that individual. The *Sul-hween/Elders* of yester-year were extremely strict about knowing and understanding one's family and one's extended family. All of the Elders agreed that falling in love with a first, second, third or fourth cousin is taboo and is shameful.

Another family protocol in yester-year was that violence was the last option. The *Sul-hween/Elders* of yester-year did not encourage violence. Mary-Ellen shares her grandmother's teachings about violence:

She taught us that if someone wants to fight with you, someone wants to hit you. 'Let them hit you, don't hit back,' she told us. 'Don't hit back; that just creates more fighting and it will carry on and on. [Why they are angry] is there; ask them why. [Ask] if they want to talk about it, find out why they are feeling that way, that they hit you.'

It is clear from this example that violence within the community was avoidable and that communication was the emphasis for the *Hul'q'umi'num'* society of yester-year. It is important to note that community members were interconnected and that they relied

on each other. In yester-year everyone in the community helped each other and cared for each other. The people were not savages who had no value or morals; the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people had a great generosity and strong family bonds.

Grandparents played a significant role in the life of the children of the family. In yester-year, it was not uncommon for grandchildren to live with their grandparents, or for the grandparents to live with their children and grandchildren. The family bond was strong and supportive. Willie tells us that he and his siblings were raised by their grandparents after the death of their parents; at that time, a number of young boys stayed with the grandparents. The grandparents' house originally had a crawl space that they all slept in happily. In rough weather in the winter, barge ships would lose some of their cargo and lumber would wash up on the beach. The young boys who stayed with the grandparents were sent out to collect the lumber on the beach. With that lumber, the grandfather and the boys built an attic. "...Many people lived in our house. We just had a little two-bedroom house and we had an attic." Willie goes on to say that when the attic was complete they, "dragged mattresses up there and that is where they slept."

In the household described, everyone had an active role. Willie says that "they all were really close...they all lived with us. My grandfather never said nothing. They would just get everyone together." When the grandfather would get everyone together, he would give them tasks to do for the day such as fishing, hunting, digging clams, spearing octopus on the reef. There was an abundance of food and everyone helped to provided for the household.

At dinner time, everyone had to eat together and no one was allowed to leave the table. Willie says that during dinner they would eat and laugh about the day, talk about

what they had learnt and how they could do things better the next time. The grandfather would “...tap his cup – TAP TAP TAP...” to get everyone’s attention. When everyone was silent, grandpa would give a lesson of *Snuw’uyulh*. The time spent at the table gave the grandfather the opportunity to spend time with each person living in his house, acknowledge everyone who contributed to the household, discuss lessons learned during the day and help individuals who are searching to improve their skills. The child/youth was prepared for the future by being given the rules of life at the dinner table on a daily basis.

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* would gather with other *Sul-hween/Elders* so that they could share the *Snuw’uyulh* with the young people of the household. An older youth would be sent out to bring the visiting *Sul-hween/Elder* to their home (Smith, A). The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* recognized that the neighbouring communities may have slightly different *Snuw’uyulh*, based on their surroundings and environment. The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* emphasised learning from each other based on *Respect*.

The *Sul-hween/Elder* who was brought in may have been from a different community in the *Hul’q’umi’num’*-speaking territory. In each territory, there are different dialects and the *Snuw’uyulh* differs slightly but those differences were expected. “You called [them] from a different place, you’d think that your *Snuw’uyulh* is different but it is not, it is the same.” The similarities were highlighted and the inclusive nature of the *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* was emphasized.

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* of yester-year did not see the borders of the reserves; they supported each other. Angus shares that one ‘reserve’ was not better than another, and that the people accepted the differences or variations in the *Snuw’uyulh*. As

Arvid tells us, it is very common for families to have their own teachings; “some teachings were not shared outside the family, it really belonged to that family.” It was not expected that everyone be the same; everyone *Respected* each other. The unity of the families, communities and communication between them were meaningful and everyone had a place or a space.

Parenting and Snuw’uyulh

Throughout this chapter we have touched upon a number of topics. Now we will explore the concept *Snuw’uyulh* and parenting. Angus shares that “when the old people used to put down the words it was all true, they were strong words. When they put down the words it is right from the heart, when they talk their tears run down their face... Your grandparents, they really mean it. They are not just making it up; they mean what they say by way of emotions.” Traditionally, grandparents play a significant role in raising the grandchildren in the family. The grandparents carry the life experience and the wisdom; they guide the family as a whole. When children grow up and begin their lives -start their own family- the grandparents are there to assist in the trials of life and to offer the rules of *Snuw’uyulh*.

Fetus

Parenting begins when a couple discovers that the woman is pregnant. Bernard shares that “this is when they start preaching to her... then they start talking to her, telling her what she is supposed to do and not do”. The *Sul-hween/Elders* would lay down the expectations and responsibilities associated with those expectations, explaining to the newly expectant parents that their lifestyle would change immediately and that more changes would arrive with the baby.

I used to hear about young ladies or ladies when they became pregnant. You become, 'in the family way'; they are 'carrying'. You are talking to the baby while it is in the womb. The lady is still carrying the child and already passing on the teachings to the baby through talking. That is how I was raised, people talking like that.

Arvid goes on to say that when the woman understands that she is carrying a child the *Sul-hween/Elders* lay down the *Snuw'uyulh* and disciplines to the unborn child, the mother and the father. The *Sul-hween/Elders* would speak out loud to the child in the womb. The mother was taught to treat herself with great care; her body is especially sacred at this time. Willie shares that the father was taught to treat the mother as sacred; it was frowned upon and corrected if he was abusive to her. "...If the father-to-be was abusive, they took him apart. Because the mother, the expectant mother can't live in hurt or fear; it is not good for the foetus", taking him apart by way of lecturing him about his abusive state. Both mother and father were given the *Snuw'uyulh* to navigate the changes that a woman goes through during pregnancy. As Bernard says, "when a lady is carrying a baby she has got to be active, you can't be laying around otherwise you will have a hard labour".

In yester-year there was no hospital, doctor, nurse or ambulance; it was not uncommon for a father to deliver his own child. Bernard said, "I delivered my son. I [was told what to do], to give my late wife something to chew on; but they never told me what it was. We had a real easy labour on account of that medicine that she was chewing".

Infancy

Arvid shares that after the baby is born, the parents are to follow strict guidelines and restrictions on hunting, fishing, the food that they are to eat, activities that they can participate in and sleeping patterns because, as Mary-Ellen states, “it’s a sacred time”. Parenting was taken seriously and was a significant portion of the *Snuw’uyulh*. Willie says that “...your child is born with a clean slate. Every day you are writing how that child is to be”. Parenting *Snuw’uyulh* is designed to help the child find success and the talents that they were born with, and to enhance those talents. Mary-Ellen shares,

I find myself talking to my great-grand daughter, telling her what to do.

She does not even talk yet. And it is something to see all these new children, they can spazz out. Ahh my! I never say that!

Mary-Ellen understands that it is hard to correct/discipline a baby, but the baby needs to be disciplined. Traditionally, discipline is not an abusive act. Traditionally, discipline is needed to help the baby understand the *Snuw’uyulh*. Mary-Ellen’s experience is that, “...they understand if you say no. And ah, that is something for a very small baby. Some say that they don’t understand and I say, ‘YES THEY DO!’”

Discipline is supportive and comes from love. Arvid shares that “when they are still babies, [parents] speak to them like [the babies] are grown up; they are teaching them already. Then, when they are growing up, they will and do understand”.

Bernard remembers that from the birth, the parents, aunts, uncles, and grandparents are sharing *Snuw’uyulh* with the baby. “When your child is born, before he even starts walking, you are telling him the way he is going to be when he grows up.

Before they start walking they are passing on teachings, the way they are going to be for the rest of their lives”.

Teaching *Snuw'uyulh* to the child begins in the womb by talking to the foetus while the baby is still in the womb. The teachings of *Snuw'uyulh* continue throughout all phases of childhood and adolescents. It is worthwhile to share the teachings to the baby; Mary-Ellen recognizes that “they understand, ‘because she [the baby] understands when you are talking to her. She does not talk yet but she understands. She’ll keep it.”

Childhood

Ideally, childhood consists of being raised by your mother and father. Sometimes, children were orphaned. The grandparents were often the ones who took over the rearing of the children in that particular family. If the grandparents were deceased, an aunt, uncle or extended family member took over and the child (ren) became their child (ren) or adopted as one of their own child (ren). It must be noted that in yester-year there was no financial aid for a family that generously took in orphans. The child (ren) was taken in to the family without question, and the extra members of the family were provided for.

Mary-Ellen remembers when they went to live with their grandparents:

...my grandparents only spoke *Hul'q'umi'num'*. So I and my two brothers had to learn *Hul'q'umi'num'*; that was something. I was nine and had to learn.... So we learnt to speak to the grandparents. She was a quiet lady; she was not a shouting grandmother. She was a very quiet lady. She teaches quietly.

This *Sul-hween/Elder* had a seven-year-old and a one-and-a-half-year-old brother. From a young age, they were taught “...don’t be running around, don’t be screaming. She

would say to my baby brother, ‘no screaming.’” The grandmother did not want the small children to be hurt: in times of yester-year a child needed to be well behaved, as the environment was dangerous. Whether digging clams by the water, fishing, using wood stoves and open fires, children needed to listen to adults and be aware of their environment. As Mary-Ellen points out, “if my grandmother said keep still, well, you keep still,” the parents created awareness to the dangers in the environment.

Children were expected to accomplish chores. From a young age Mary-Ellen was taught to learn by observation. M. Joe’s grandmother also used positive affirmation to create confidence in the child. The following is an example of the leaning method utilized by the *Hul’q’umi’num’* society,

I was the one in the kitchen, and doing the house. But sometimes my grandmother would leave her knitting; I would go there and start trying to knit. And she would come back and she would tell me it was too tight and she would rip it all down, my work. And then, so I used to just watch her, she would sit me down and do it. And then...when I got my own home...she gave me a spinner that was my late mother’s... and I tried to tell her, I don’t know how to spin. You know just telling her in *Hul’q’umi’num’* and she says, “YES, you do! You just have to sit down there and do it!”...she put in my head...you shouldn’t say that you can’t do something, you just got to get up and do it. So that was the teaching she taught me...I was able to spin...She says, “If you really want to learn something you just watch.

Unity is an important aspect of the *Snuw'uyulh* teachings, but each unit is made up of individuals who are unique unto themselves and each individual needs to demonstrate resiliency. Mary-Ellen says that “nobody has to take your hands and guide you.” The support is there but the self-motivation needs to accompany the support of the family. Bernard shares that “we were helping our parents, it was a must [that we learn] everything.” The family teaches you, and you learn the *Snuw'uyulh*.

Willie shows that as children, they developed an understanding for the development of maturity to participate without protest or resistance.

They all had their chores to do when they woke up; my younger uncle was there and was telling the boys what to do. All the chores were there waiting for the boys to do. They go out and got wood in the morning that is their job. One goes fishing, paddling on the canoe. Two go hunting, one shoots ducks. They also go out and they gather little necks and butter clams. They go down and they get all the food, no one is upset about doing the chores. They are just happy to get all the food and what they need. They are just happy to do it. When they gather up in the evening, the grandpa would put down the words for the teachings, and tell the boys how to be when they grow up.

Traditionally the child was raised by the family; the *Snuw'uyulh* philosophy, life skills, work habits, communication skills and parenting skills were given to them as they grew to be independent and self-sufficient. They were given the training to become a well rounded, reliable, responsible individual with a healthy self-esteem and sense of self-

worth. Arvid described that encouraging words were given to enable the child to find success in their daily life and no harsh words were used with the child.

Children were taught social etiquette, how to behave in a crowd or a cultural gathering. Mary-Ellen says of her grandmother, “she told us, ‘don’t be laughing too much in a crowd, ‘because our *Sul-hween/Elders* are sensitive. If you are laughing, they will think you are laughing at them.’”

Mary-Ellen goes on to remember such times that they went through, and how they were taught to represent the family in an honourable way.

That is a lot of things one person goes through with their grandparents. It is a privilege and I sure appreciate it...once in a while I would share if anyone asks. I would share how I was grown, how I was raised.

Children were seen and heard, they were given the tools to participate in society; these tools were based on the *Snuw’uyulh*. It was a privilege to be shown the rules of life, a privilege to be shown the *Snuw’uyulh*. Angus described the *Snuw’uyulh* as being “big”, meaning that it is extremely valuable, priceless, that it gives the rules of life from the womb to infancy, through childhood, adolescence, parenting, sacred ceremonies, death and the afterlife. The *Snuw’uyulh* also highlights puberty.

Puberty and Snuw’uyulh

The discussion in this section describes the *Sul-hween/Elders* experience of yester-year with regards to puberty. Puberty is a rite of passage that is celebrated and honoured, when an adolescent’s body changes toward adulthood. This rite of passage is important to acknowledge because it is an opportunity for the young adult to begin this

stage of his or her life, with the right intention and with the *Snuw'uyulh* that can help set the young adult on the right and resilient path.

This is the time to preach to the individual and to give them the sacred rules of life, for all of their future endeavours. The way that an individual will conduct their life, the conception of a child and the birth of a child are highlighted during this rite. Willie shares that they discussed what it means to be in a union of man and woman, by giving new adults an understanding of the role that they will play together as a family unit.

The *Ta't Mustimuw/Ancestors* would teach the young men how and why they need to provide for their future family. According to Willie, “when he grows up to be a man, they teach him how to hunt. They tell the man that he has to fix his canoe and get ready to go out hunting; that he needs to earn a living”. Everything that is shared with the individual during this time is based on the *Snuw'uyulh*; it is the teachings that will provide the individual with the confidence to enter into his future.

When a female enters puberty the teaching that they received, as Bernard explains, was that “...when they became young woman with periods, everything was sacred...you wash the young woman in a sacred way,” The young woman would be restricted to abide by the *Snuw'uyulh* of puberty. She would be kept busy, working with her hands; her diet would be restricted.

Mary-Ellen remembers that the young lady would be kept busy so she would carry that trait into her adult life. Her diet would be restricted as her body is experiencing something vastly different than it was accustomed to as a child. She would eat lightly, so as not to tire her body with the process of digestion while menstruating. She would be kept busy with her hands but her activities would not be physically strenuous, so as not to

add stress to her body while bleeding for the first time. The adults used sacred ceremonial dances to usher her through, washing her childhood and adolescence away and ushering her into adulthood. It is a sacred time for her and an acknowledgement of her preparation for her future.

Gus discussed that young men and young women are taught to regard sexual intercourse as something sacred, that sex is much more than a physical action or physical gratification. Sex is sharing you whole self: body, mind and soul. They are lectured that sex brings about life and to engage in sexual intercourse requires an understanding of the responsibility of bringing a life into this world. That a spouse needs to be chosen with great consideration, family history needs to be researched as it is cultural taboo to consummate a relationship with too close a relative.

Grief, death and Snuw'uyulh

Willie shared that the object of the *Snuw'uyulh* is to give the individual an understanding that the obstacles experienced during the individual's lifetime, is to be used as a guide to assist in the evolution of maturation. The obstacles, trials, and maturity is a process that the *Snuw'uyulh* provided the 'tough love' and rules for the harder times in life. *Snuw'uyulh* covered both the happy times and the stages of grief and loss. The *Snuw'uyulh* taught that death is a part of life.

One of the most traumatizing events that a person can experience is the death of a loved one. The *Snuw'uyulh* that accompanies these events are strict and to be taken with great caution. The gateway to the afterlife is open when someone passes away, and the ones left behind to mourn must be cautious. The afterlife may be considered in Christian terms as 'heaven' or in other cultures as the 'spirit world'. The *Snuw'uyulh* has taught for

generations that in the afterlife, there is no pain and there is a reunion with the ones who left this world for the next; that you enter this ‘afterlife’ when the Creator decides.

Snuwuyulh teaches that it is not of our choice to take our life that it is that of the creator to choose. That by committing suicide the individual does not enter the afterlife but an in-between world where there is much confusion and pain. It is not a choice or decision for the individual.

The *Snuw’uyulh* does not only teach daily routine and the laws that govern the spiritual practices; it also enables the individual to survive the difficulties associated with the death of a loved one. Willie shares that “when you lose someone, you have got to follow a certain set of rules [for the grieving process]. If you don’t follow that, you fall into a trap”. The trap is never finding a way out of the grief brought on by the death of a loved one.

The *Snuw’uyulh* also speaks to the individuals who are not the immediate family. The *Snuw’uyulh* tells those individuals how to support the one who experienced death and also the ones that are left to mourn. Prior to the influences of western society, the *Hul’q’umi’num’* people handled the body and the resting place. With the influence of western society came the implementation of funeral homes and burial, which introduced a great financial cost associated with the death of a loved one.

Snuw’uyulh tells the *Hul’q’umi’num’* communities that they must assist their people at the time of death. At the introduction of western laws regarding the handling of the body of the deceased and the burial, the *Hul’q’umi’num’ Sul-hween/Elders* of the time developed a collection system. Volunteers from nearly all of the *Hul’q’umi’num’* communities and surrounding Coast Salish communities collect donations of money from

the community members. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* territory is very large and the population is constantly growing; death in the community is inevitable. At times the collectors are gathering for three, four or five deaths at a time. The *Snuw'uyulh* of helping requires generosity and sacrifice on many levels. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* people who practice *Snuw'uyulh* help willingly and thankfully; because everyone experiences the death of a loved one at one time or another in life and when it happens the help will be reciprocated (W. Seymour). The individuals who grieve are supported by the *Snuw'uyulh*. The *Snuw'uyulh* understands that grief involves strong emotions.

The *Snuw'uyulh* also understands that it is important to guard the mind and the spirit during this time of need. In the *Snuw'uyulh* of grieving is the understanding and acceptance that the grieving individual will not know what to do to feel better after the death or tragedy of a loved one. Angus describes that the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* would gather and offer the *Snuw'uyulh* that they carry, sharing their experience of the death of a loved one with the grieving family. The *Ta't Mustimuwh* would wrap the grieving person in a blanket of *Snuw'uyulh* and share the words with the individual. The *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* would help to 'put down the grief', 'put down the mind'; meaning to show the grieving family how to do release the grief. After the *Ta't Mustimuwh* shared their words/*Snuw'uyulh*, they shared how to navigate the rough waters of grief. The grieving person would share his or her feelings and thoughts and release the feelings in a productive, supportive, healing way. The individual was thereby released from the burden of grief, and provide avenues for closure to the grieving process.

Angus shared that "you cry together, you cry together to bring in the good feeling of release and healing." When you support the grieving family, you bring with you good

intentions, good feelings and a good mind. Angus said, “You have good thoughts and then you go and put your money down to help your friends. You [lift] his head.” While individuals usually give the grieving family money five dollars or more -whatever they can afford to assist in the funeral costs- the presence of family and friends is seen to be the ‘medicine’ that most helps the grieving people. The grieving family nominates an individual who takes note of the donations of money; when a donor experiences tragedy of the same kind, the recipient returns the money; often with extra money added. This is one cycle of generosity and help from the teachings of *Snuw’uyulh* that continues to this day.

There are many built-in supportive structures within the *Snuw’uyulh*. The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* were wise in laying down a path for the generations to follow.

Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors: Sul-hween/Elders of yester-year

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors*, the grandparents and great-grandparents and some great-great-grandparents of yester-year, were the ones who taught the *Sul-hween/Elders* of the present day. The *Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in these focus groups all shared their words and the words of their Elders the, *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors*. The words they spoke were not their own teachings; they shared that these words come from their *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* of yester-year who passed away many years ago. To honour the *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors*, this section of this thesis was added to wrap up the philosophy and worldview of the *Snuw’uyulh*. Ed Seymour shares that “everything was special to them, sacred to the old people, and everything had to be done so”. Life was a precious gift to the old people and one’s life needed to be lived as a gift. He goes on to say, “They put down the words, the way that

they were supposed to be”. When the words were laid down/shared out loud, the individuals who were receiving the *Snuw’uyulh* were supposed to listen and be respectful of the speaker. They were to be respectful of the speaker because the speaker cared and valued the listener enough to share the gifts of the *Snuw’uyulh*.

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* read the body language of the people around them: they had high work ethics and everyone was required to contribute to the home environment. As Mary-Ellen remembers,

When my brothers were old enough and having our hands in our pockets too much, [my grandmother] took all our jeans and sewed the pockets shut. She says if you keep your hands in your pocket all the time then you will be good for nothing. You will be walking around with your hands in your pocket; she said that quietly to my brothers. That was one of her teachings. That was quite the thing my grandmother and my grandfather.

Mary-Ellen shares that their grandparents always had them doing something. They did not have modern technology such as electricity, and all the appliances that go along with it. They valued what they had, like candles, gas lights and woodstoves. Arvid says that the *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* “used to talk to us in ‘strong words’, stressing the meaning of life and the dangers one can encounter while living out their life.” As Angus explains, “The *Snuw’uyulh*... the way the old people used to preach, they will warn you, they tell you to take care.”

An honour is bestowed upon the listener when a *Sul-hween/Elder* preaches the *Snuw’uyulh* to them. Angus described the honour as “...a really very big, special,

everything good is in there.... When and *Sul-hween/Elder* talks to you, you listen.” The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* were spiritual people. They also had respect for other spiritual practices: as Mary-Ellen remembers, her grandparent stated that they must “...have respect for other religions, don’t ever make fun of other religions...” The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* would begin by praying in the morning. Arvid remembers being taught, “Early in the morning when the sun just starts to break. Just starting to day break and you are already there being thankful to see another day.”

The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* were spiritual beings that honoured life. This is evident in the glimpse we have seen in the words of the *Sul-hween/Elders*. They honoured every aspect of life. It was an honour to have rules that prepared the people for every possible change that an individual encounters in life. The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* explained responsibility; it was expected that everybody would understand the meaning of responsibility. The *Ta’t Mustimuwh/Ancestors* developed a healthy, functioning society where its individuals were expected to display the characteristics of *Snuw’uyulh*.

Conclusion

The *Snuw’uyulh* are not lost: they are there for any *Hul’q’umi’num’* person who is interested in learning, but there needs to be an active participation to learn and practice traditional ways. The *Sul-hween/Elders* are willing and waiting to teach.

Chapter Five: Summary, Discussion and Recommendations

Introduction

The information gathered throughout this thesis is summarized and discussed in this chapter. The results and the implications of the study as well as recommendations for future research and personal reflection are addressed in the conclusion. This thesis assisted the *Sul-hween/Elders* in revitalizing the *Snuw'uyulh* (teachings based on the *Hul'q'umi'num'* concept of *Respect*); brought awareness to restoring the *Sul-hween/Elders'* rightful place as the source of wisdom in family, community and cultural societies; reminded us that the *Sul-hween/Elders'* life-long journeys have meaning, and that their life experiences and in-depth understanding of the *Snuw'uyulh* help younger generations to recognize and to celebrate successes; and gave an understanding of the *Sul-hween/Elders'* concerns with regard to the *Snuw'uyulh* and the priceless information that they want to share with the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people and

Results

As revealed in earlier chapters, only one question was posed to the *Hul'q'umi'num' Sul-hween/Elders* during the focus group sessions: “What is your greatest concern about the *Snuw'uyulh* today?” Responses to that one question at every focus group included: the meaning of *Snuw'uyulh*; the attitude of the younger people; the obstacles of teaching *Snuw'uyulh* today, including drugs, alcohol and colonization; grief over losing the teachings; the importance of the *Snuw'uyulh* teachings; unity, communication and family protocol; parenting (of the fetus, the infant and the child); puberty; grief and death; and the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*. The *Sul-hween/Elders*

shared their concerns regarding the attitude of younger people, the generational gap and trans-generational transfer of knowledge.

The Elders described the issues that they face when attempting to communicate with the younger generations. In this scenario the generations include grandparents, parents, grand-children and, in some cases, great-grand children.

The meaning of Snuw'uyulh

The *Sul-hween/Elders* described the physical environment that they grew up in: no electricity, no modern amenities such as clothes-washers and -dryers, refrigerators and stoves, microwave ovens, telephones, computers and mp3 players. Instead, they had woodstoves which required, on a daily basis, the gathering of wood as well as the splitting and packing of wood. Wood needed to be readied for the next year, as the wood needed to dry: this involved felling trees, bucking up and stacking logs. If they had access to running water, it was cold water only. This meant that water had to be heated up to bathe, cook and wash clothing. The clothing was washed by hand on a scrub board, if they had one.

Why is this worth mentioning? The difference between the grandparents and grandchildren is a fundamental difference in the worldview and work habits. The *Sul-hween/Elders*, in their childhood, had to work hard (as did everyone else) to contribute to the family's well-being. The families of yester-year sometimes planned two years in advance, gathering and preparing for the days to come. Everyone was able to celebrate successes at the end of the day at the dinner table: everyone was praised for their hard work.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* would gather everyone at the table and had the opportunity to share the *Snuw'uyulh*. Though families in the time of the Elders' childhoods were busy, today's pace of life is faster; the young are on the go in a very different way than their grandparents were.

The *Snuw'uyulh* was designed to help individuals, families, extended families, communities and nations through the many stages of life. The *Snuw'uyulh* was complex and covered many areas; many have been included in this study, but many more topics are considered culturally sensitive material and are not to be shared publicly.

The *Snuw'uyulh* teachings of *Respect* were passed through oral tradition. These teachings were not meant to be written down. The *Sul-hween/Elders* who participated in this study understood that this thesis would be written and thought that it would be a useful tool for sharing the *Snuw'uyulh*, as a modern mode of transmission of *Snuw'uyulh* in current times. Teaching *Snuw'uyulh* was historically personal, a one-on-one connection; communication within the family, community and nation. *Snuw'uyulh* are the rules of life or life skills that describe the virtues of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. This was, and is, an oral guide to the meaning of self, self-conduct, care for self and providing for self so that one will know how to raise a foetus to birth, raise an infant, raise a child, usher an adolescent through puberty and wash away their childhood. It also teaches how to be a man or a woman, how to behave when a woman becomes pregnant and how a man is to conduct himself when his spouse is pregnant, how to conduct oneself in a marriage and how to speak to one's spouse; and finally, how to be a *Sul-hween/Elder*. The *Snuw'uyulh* spoke of how an individual fits into the collective larger community. The *Snuw'uyulh* gave the individual the foundation on which to build a future as a self-

confident and reliable person. The meaning of *Snuw'uyulh* is significant, as large and complex as life is itself.

The attitude of younger generations and obstacles in teaching the Snuw'uyulh

The fundamental challenge is in relating to the younger generations that the *Snuw'uyulh* teachings are still applicable and are still valuable. There is still the need for healthy, strong communication, family unity, spirituality and the *Snuw'uyulh* rules of life. The rules of life can be considered in today's definition as 'life skills'. In times gone by, in yester-year, every family member was given the rules of life. It was every *Hul'q'umi'num'* person's right to learn them and it was expected that they would be taught.

Today there is a fundamental communication breakdown. The younger generations do not take in *Snuw'uyulh* as the youth did in yester-year, and the value of the *Snuw'uyulh* is not understood. The *Sul-hween/Elders* see that the younger generations do not listen, and the Elders find it extremely disrespectful. The *Sul-hween/Elders* see the value in the *Snuw'uyulh* and attribute their life and the happiness that they have found along to the way to the *Snuw'uyulh*. They also note that it is not the fault of the youth that they do not listen; they see that the parents need to learn and practice the *Snuw'uyulh* too. They also see that *Sul-hween/Elders* need to get up and share the truths of life, the teachings of *Snuw'uyulh*. There must be a collective movement to bring it back and show that it is still applicable to today.

Drugs and alcohol, residential schools and colonization bring about the obstacles in teaching the Snuw'uyulh

Obstacles in teaching the *Snuw'uyulh* are the effects of colonization. The residential school era created a significant fracture in the *Hul'q'umi'num'* society. The effects of modern technology have interfered with one-on-one human contact and human communication. This may not be an issue for certain cultures, but it is an issue for the *Hul'q'umi'num'* community as this culture is traditionally an oral culture.

The effects of drugs and alcohol have had devastating results. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* people, prior to contact, had no connection or exposure to alcohol and drugs. The results from the use of drugs and alcohol on the lives of Aboriginal people are devastating. Lives and families are broken; success is not easily accessible when the onset of alcoholism occurs.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* speak from a different worldview, having experienced many successes as well as trials and errors. The younger generations do not have these experiences to the same degree. The *Sul-hween/Elders* have an understanding that the teachings of yester-year can and will help their people if they are willing to listen. Time and time again, they repeated the words, 'only if they will listen.' The *Sul-hween/Elders* are witness to how the *Snuw'uyulh* has created success in the *Ta't Mustimuw/Ancestors'* lifetime, their parents' lifetime and their lifetime. The *Sul-hween/Elders* only wish that the younger generations take the opportunity to learn and follow the rules of life.

Grieving the loss of the Snuw'uyulh

The *Sul-hween/Elders* genuinely grieve the loss of their teachings. The fear is that the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people will truly be lost, because the *Snuw'uyulh* is not as present as

it was in yester-year. How will the younger people understand, ‘the true meaning and principles of life’? These two points seem simple enough, as you say it out loud and those seven words roll off the tip of your tongue. However, as you can see through Chapter Four, the answer to those seven words requires a good many more words in return. The *Sul-hween/Elders* wait and have waited: they hold those many words and memories in their mouths, wondering if anyone will come to have their spirit fed and their minds made strong with *Snuw’uyulh*.

Unity, communication and family protocol

The *Hul’q’umi’num’ Sul-hween/Elders* remember the unity, communication and family protocol with tears in their eyes. They remember the times of yester-year when everyone worked together. They remember being taken under the wing of their *Ta’t Mustimuw/Ancestors*, with their aunt or uncle, grandmother or grandfather, or, if they were lucky, their mother or father (many were not raised by their parents due to sickness or alcoholism, leading to death). They knew in their heart and soul that to be given the *Snuw’uyulh* meant that they were loved and cared for. They knew that it was an honour and a privilege to be given the rules of life, to be taught how to work and to be self-sufficient. They were taught deep and complex spiritual practices that honoured all of life and the afterlife. They were taught the importance of self care, which strengthened their body, mind and spirit.

Parenting the foetus, the infant and the child

Parenting began when the pregnancy was discovered. The *Sul-hween/Elders* preached to both the man and the woman, preparing them for their lifelong commitment to raising the child that they had created. They were reminded that sexual intercourse was

not an action to be taken lightly as it produces life: where there is life, there is spirituality. *Snuw'uyulh* honours spirituality; therefore, *Snuw'uyulh* approaches sexual intercourse as an act between a man and a woman with the intent to create a spiritual being.

Snuw'uyulh is shared with the child while in the womb. The mother and her body are to be honoured and treated as sacred. When the infant is born, he or she is talked to with the expectation that he or she can understand, and knows the difference between right and wrong. The infant is treated as a human being with feelings and a spirit. He or she is protected and treated as sacred.

Children were treated as active members of the family and expected to contribute to the well-being of the family. They were an important part of the family because they were the future. *Sul-hween/Elders* took great honour in teaching the child; it was the child's right to be prepared for the life that he or she would lead and it was the responsibility of the adults to make sure that this happened.

Puberty

Puberty is an extremely important point in one's lifetime. At the onset of puberty, the child moves into adulthood, the next phase of life. The child is ceremonially washed away; the individual is ceremonially welcomed into the new world of adulthood. They are 'stood' in the midst of those who preached the *Snuw'uyulh*; they are honoured and cautioned about their actions as an adult and how important it is that their actions come from a holistic place, based on the *Snuw'uyulh*, virtues of life. Throughout the process they are honoured and kept safe; restrictions are placed on the individual, not to be harsh or cruel, but to honour the sacred time that they are in. The young adult is given the *Snuw'uyulh* truths of life to prepare for the years to come.

Grief and death

The teachings enable the grieving individual to:

- take care of themselves during the initial loss and shock;
- understand that death is the doorway to the afterlife;
- be supported by loved ones in a cultural way;
- use *Hul'q'umi'num'* ceremony and *Hul'q'umi'num'* protocol to assist in their acceptance of the death of the loved one;
- understand the significance of death in a spiritual way;
- follow a healing path in the days and months to come after the funeral and ceremonies around death; and
- Develop spiritually from this healing, no matter the age of the grieving person.

The teachings also provide an opportunity for individuals who have been in a similar situation to share their stories and how they worked through the process using traditions. *Sul-hween/Elders* are the ones who stand up and share, taking the grieving person 'under their wing' and offer a voice to follow out of the fog that engulfs the one left behind.

The *Sul-hween/Elders* also call *Snuw'uyulh* 'truths', and believe that is where young people have to look to learn how to value life.

The Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors

The *Sul-hween/Elders* stress that they did not make the truths of the *Snuw'uyulh*. These are the rules and truths that were shared with them by their parents, grandparents and, if they were lucky, their great-grandparents.

The *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* are held in the highest esteem. The *Sul-hween/Elders* often wept when the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* were mentioned. The wisdom of the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors' Snuw'uyulh* leaves the Elders of today with

great admiration. The *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* shared with the *Sul-hween/Elders* of today that their words (the words of the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*) are not their own; they were passed down from *their Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*. These rules and truths are simple but require dedication and constant growth and maturation. *Sul-hween/Elders* of today are insistent that they are still learning, still beginning to understand certain truths, and that they want to share this as their *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* did with them.

Implications

The implications of this study significant because the *Hul'q'umi'num'* *Snuw'uyulh* is not as documented as are those of many other Aboriginal people. The *Sul-hween/Elders* have made it clear that they want to reach the younger generations and share the *Snuw'uyulh* with them, paving the way for success in the lives of the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people today.

The implications, if taken seriously and valued, could create a positive change for the younger generations of *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. The *Sul-hween/Elders* believe that it is their right as *Hul'q'umi'num'* people to have the *Snuw'uyulh* by which to conduct their lives and begin to foster the precious virtues of the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors*.

This study allows the *Ta't Mustimuwh/Ancestors* to speak across time, and allows *Sul-hween/Elders* of today to let the younger generations know that they are waiting for them to step into their birthright. The younger generations deserve to live a good life knowing that they are important, valued and cherished human beings.

As illustrated in this study, the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people are not just another 'band' or 'group' of people. They have (and have had) sound moral virtues. The *Hul'q'umi'num'* society is kind, considerate, self-sustaining; and it supports the resiliency

of its people. There is still an opportunity to learn about the *Hul'q'umi'num'* society: it is not lost; it is still here.

Recommendations

The *Sul-hween/Elders* in this study would like to see a conference between *Sul-hween/Elders* and youth, to come together and speak of the *Snuw'uyulh*. They would like to offer to the youth an opportunity to understand that every person is important, valued and cherished. They want to share with the youth a little bit of the history of residential schools and colonization, letting them know why and where alcoholism and drug abuse comes from and share with them the implications of these same.

There is further opportunity to continue this type of research, in an appropriate way that *Respects* the *Hul'q'umi'num'* society and cultural beliefs. There is the opportunity for further cross-cultural education to happen. Most *Hul'q'umi'num'* parents or grandparents are cultural people who belong to one or more of the sacred societies associated with the *Hul'q'umi'num'* people. As such, at some level or another, most *Hul'q'umi'num'* children are attending school with a basic understanding of *Hul'q'umi'num' Snuw'uyulh*. As we explored in this research, the worldview of these children may differ from their school peers and educator; knowing that may assist the educator in his or her efforts to bridge the gap in the classroom.

Conclusion

There are a great benefits for *Hul'q'umi'num'* people who learn from the teachings of their people. The *Snuw'uyulh* teaches the skills that are needed in life; they teach how to move from one stage of life into another; they give each and every individual a valuable role in the community and they show people how to function as a

healthy family. The *Snuw'uyulh* is tried, tested and true, as it has been practiced for thousands of years. The *Snuw'uyulh* is simple but not easy; it is structured so that every possible situation in life will be covered and so that the person is prepared for it or is able to find help. It is a humble lifestyle that is built on the ability of each individual to have a place and responsibility in the family, extended family, community and nation.

Personal reflections

I do not profess to know much of the *Snuw'uyulh*, although I am honoured to have been given a very little. At first, I wondered how to apply it to my life. At the time, I was doing my first year of my under graduate degree. I knew that the *Snuw'uyulh* was asking me to move from my 'head' to my 'heart' and to let my actions come from a place of truth. At the time, I saw the value in it, but viewed it as something from the past. I thought to myself, "We cannot hunt, fish and live off the land like we did before." The thought occurred to me one day that my fish are my grades and progress in education; my hard work is getting to class on time and doing my homework without being asked to; my virtue is to take my life seriously and to live a good life.

The *Snuw'uyulh* taught me that I am not alone. It taught me how to build a solid foundation of spirituality. The *Snuw'uyulh* teaches me how to parent: I do still make mistakes, but I find a way through it. The *Snuw'uyulh* teaches me how to function with my life partner as we begin our life together. The *Snuw'uyulh* teaches me how to communicate, which I continue to learn as I move through different stages of maturity. The *Snuw'uyulh* taught me how to care for the people in my family. The *Snuw'uyulh* taught me how to heal. The *Snuw'uyulh* tells me I am important and that I have value. This is what the *Snuw'uyulh* and my *Sul-hween/Elders* gave me. I have tears in my eyes

as I type these words: they are right, “it is a good thing”. I have learnt that what they say is true.

I was given the opportunity to understand the cycle of life, the phases of life; in short, to heal the pain of days gone by. I build myself around the fact that I come from a strong people. I understand that I am taken care of and loved; if by no one who walks the earth, well, then by my loved ones in the afterlife. I am never alone. I am honoured to have been given the opportunity to share the time with the *Sul-hween/Elders* and to let the *Hul'q'umi'num'* youth know: they wait for you and welcome your company.

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Appendix A- Questionnaire

1. What is your greatest concern regarding *Snuw'uyulh* today?