

sqwiilqwul'tul 'words used when talking to one another':

Speaking our hul'q'umi'num' language with our land

By

tisholas (Tracie Finstad)

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

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Abstract

This project explores the connections between the sounds of our land and the consonant sounds of our hul'q'umi'num' language, a Coast Salish language spoken on Vancouver Island. These connections were made by listening to sounds found on the land in four areas within hul'q'umi'num' speaking territory including the mountains, the forest, the river and the beach, and relating them to sounds in the language. In each area, speakers of hul'q'umi'num' were recorded saying an individual consonant that reflected a sound of the land, as well as a corresponding word list. Some speakers also offered descriptions on how the sound is articulated. The sounds of the land, individual consonant sounds, word lists and the descriptions of articulation were woven together to create eight videos (one per sound), designed to support speakers in developing their pronunciation of the many consonant sounds of hul'q'umi'num' that are not found in English. This land-based pronunciation resource is intended to develop the acquisition of hul'q'umi'num' consonant sounds by inviting the land to participate as a teacher.

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Dedication



This project is dedicated to the land and people of Snaw'naw'as.

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ah si'ém nu s'ulxwéen:

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hay cep qa 'u tu sii'em 'un shqweluwun 'i kwun'etuxw

'thank you all for the respectful thoughts that you hold'

1. Introduction

This project is a compilation of eight videos that connect the phonetic sounds in hul'q'umi'num', one of many Coast Salish languages, to the sounds within hul'q'umi'num' speaking territory with a focus on places in and around the territory of Snaw'naw'as. The videos feature sounds from our hul'q'umi'num' territories and relate them to the consonant sounds of our hul'q'umi'num' language. The intention of the resource is to help learners make a connection between land and language. These connections are anticipated to build positive relationships with our hul'q'umi'num' language and act as a resource to help develop the complex sounds of the language. As one nation has said, drawing this same connection with their language and land,

But there are less and less people speaking Kwakwala, the traditional language of these lands. The land has invented language over time, and as humans came along, they found the words by the ocean, under rocks, deep, deep in the forests and sometimes in caves (Newman-Ting, 2021, p. 21).

The project ties together the many aspects of relational knowledge within Coast Salish Territory for the purpose of strengthening our connections to the phonetic sounds of hul'q'umi'num' and highlights the collective knowledge of Snaw'naw'as, which is a First Nations, hul'q'umi'num' speaking community on Vancouver Island. Keeping Indigenous research methods at the front of this work and the importance of our land and relationality, there is room to build relationships with pronunciation through holistic means to complement the technical resources that already exist.

2. Situating this Project

2.1 Situating Myself

As Shawn Wilson says in *Research is Ceremony*, “Relationality requires that you know a lot more about me before you can begin to understand my work” (2008, p. 12). I will lead as my father would lead me – with a story about my life – and I will culminate with a description of a project that will bring benefits to language learning within my community.

*een' thu tisholas tracie thunu s-xwunitum' a'lh nu sne
tun'ni' cun 'utl' snaw'naw'as 'i' kwumluxw 'utl xwqwaluxwum 'i' europe. enthu tu munu gordon
i' patti edwards. kwthunu sulsilu'alh leonard i' peggy edwards. 'uy' nu shqwaluwun kwunus 'i'
tatulut tu hul'q'umi'num' sqwal*

I am tisholas and Tracie is my English name. I am from Snaw'naw'as on my father's side and my mother's family is from England and Germany. My parents are Gordon and Patti Edwards. My late grandparents are Leonard and Peggy Edwards. My family lives in our Snaw'naw'as community and we are situated between Qualicum First Nation to the north and Snuneymuxw to the south. We are hul'q'umi'num' speaking people. I am currently learning my language. I am currently in a position where I can understand a lot more than I can speak, but I am always learning and looking for ways to advance my fluency. In the following writing, I hope you will see my journey as a language learner and advocate for the continued use of our hul'q'umi'num'¹ language. This will bring context to my final project for the Master's in Indigenous Language Revitalization that ties together pronunciation learning, language and land and relationships.

¹ hul'q'umi'num' does not follow English orthographic conventions; throughout this paper, there are no capitalizations on hul'q'umi'num' words. The one exception I make is capitalizing place names.

When I was younger, I had a strong connection to my language. One of the only words that I could speak was *'uwu* 'no'. There was a reverence to its usage, and it was a word I don't remember arguing with. I have many childhood memories of requesting candy and my father answering with *'uwu*. I would leave whatever store we were in empty handed. Even though this word often denied my requests, I remember feeling a sense of pride with the word *'uwu* and translating proudly for others – “that means no in our language”. I knew our language was important and I loved that I knew one word.

My connection to my language remained a small handful of words into adulthood. With the absence of *hul'q'umi'num'* in my life, I believed the unspoken narrative that my ancestral language was too difficult to learn, outdated and irrelevant. However, I was able to follow the patterns of our speakers at family gatherings and ceremonies, and I enjoyed the sounds and rhythm of our language. *hul'q'umi'num'* has always sounded like home. In some ways it hovers like a song in my mind for which I know the melody but not the words.

In 2007, I completed my teaching credentials in music and set off to Hay River, Northwest Territories. Hay River sits within the territory of the K'átl'odeeche First Nation. Their language is Dene Yatié (referred to as Dene in what follows). A few years into teaching music at the local high school, Diamond Jenness Secondary School, I was told I would be teaching in the Dene language class alongside the fluent teacher. It was not an assignment I was excited about at first. Over time I came to understand that my hesitation was not so much about the language itself or being assigned a class I had never taught before, but about being asked to interact with a language that had been treated like my own for so long. English had consumed day-to-day interactions, and the usage of Dene in the school was not prevalent. When we are removed from the sounds of our language, we lose context for its use, and it is easy to adopt the unspoken

narrative that our Indigenous languages are no longer needed. I, too, believed this unspoken narrative when I entered the Dene classroom. Understanding that Dene was still a strong part of many of my students' homes was one of the first things that helped me dismantle these systemic beliefs.

Part of this dismantling was having the students show me over time how they were very interested in their language. Like myself, a lot of them could only speak one or two words, and that was enough to maintain a strong connection. Many of them had fluent speakers at home, and I learned a lot from their family knowledge. My favourite memory is of one student raising his hand to correct my pronunciation. He said, "That's not how my Grandma says it." At first, it threw me off; I was the teacher and was supposed to be the leader. Then, I realised that I was in a room of experts, and I was the odd one out. This experience helped me identify the unspoken narrative about Indigenous languages, that our languages are no longer valued or needed, and realise that this narrative was false. Dene was alive and relevant in this child's life as hul'q'umi'num' should be in my life and that of my family and community.

I began a process of decolonizing my teaching style. The more I invited the knowledge and connections of the Dene community, the more I changed my approach as the "teacher" in the classroom. I understood that approaching the language as the supposed expert led to the continued suppression of Dene language within the school. The more I let that role go, the more I understood the extent to which Indigenous languages have been hidden and overshadowed by the Western education system. Through my new understanding and respect for Indigenous languages, I became curious about my own ancestral language, hul'q'umi'num'. On returning home to Salish Territory in 2018, I started looking for resources and people that would help me reconnect with myself as an Indigenous person through my language.

This move had me reflecting on my interactions with my late grandfather, Leonard Edwards. He was a fluent speaker and contributed to many of the resources that are still around and in use. One of the last memories I have is of a short conversation I had with him when he was in the hospital. My husband, Derek, and I went to visit him, and I remember walking into the room, and he greeted us with his beautiful smile. Instead of speaking to us in English like he normally would, he spoke to us in hul'q'umi'num'. I remember being surprised, smiling and saying "Grandpa, I don't understand!" He looked at me with an even bigger smile, held his hands out and said enthusiastically "It's EEEAAASY!" He was the first person to tell me that my language was not too difficult. I have held onto that as an inspiration to make reconnecting with our language accessible for me and other people.

In the spring of 2021, I was invited to attend the hul'q'umi'num' language meetings for School District 68, and the connections made there helped form the foundation for this language learning project. I had the privilege of learning with the hul'q'umi'num' language teachers from Snuneymuxw and listening to the Elders share their teachings. A particular recording of Snuneymuxw Elder Mandy Jones resonated with me. She was discussing how hul'q'umi'num' emulates the sounds found on our land. Watching this video helped me make a connection to these sounds and left me thinking about our pronunciation in a way I had never considered before. I realised that the reason many people believe our language to be difficult is because of the sounds of the language. This has been true for myself; accurate pronunciation has been a journey for me and many times I have felt that pronunciation has been a barrier to speaking my language.

This had me thinking about other subject areas that I have taught and how I would never approach the content of the class in a way that made people feel as though it was too difficult to

learn. What I would do instead is make a connection to something they do know to highlight not their deficits but their strengths. Understanding that there is a lack in resources, not a lack in our ability to speak our language, has helped me understand the last teaching my grandfather left me – it's easy. It's easy when we have learning presented within the context of cultural understandings and with respect for the process of learning.

For this project, I strived to find a way to present the sounds of hul'q'umi'num' in a holistic way, to complement existing technical descriptions. Over the duration of this project, my understanding of our language has continued to grow and strengthen. The sounds that I struggled to reproduce are only difficult when left on their own, but paired with and strengthened from the land, the ground and the waters of my people, they produce a connection for me that is stronger than any English explanation of these sounds, and therefore makes them easier to learn. I can step out onto the land and hear our land speaking hul'q'umi'num', in perfect chorus with our ancestors. It is my intention to share this experience with others through this project.

2.2 Situating My Community

Snaw'naw'as is located on Vancouver Island and is a northern Coast Salish Community. We are a community of families that can trace our ancestral ties to this land back for thousands of years. We frequented areas surrounding our current communities and across the Salish sea as well as the many islands in between. We are hul'q'umi'num' speaking people.

In 1876 the Royal Land Commission established the creation of the Nanoose Indian Reserve. The newly formed government of Canada worked at creating a strong disconnect from our ancestral homes by secluding us to 140 hectares of land outside of our usual winter village site (Reid, 2017). They wanted us closer to the highway so that they could keep a closer watch on us (personal communication, Gord Edwards, April 24, 2022). By removing us from our

ancestral lands, established through thousands of years of living on this land, they disconnected us from our inherent right to live life in accordance with our ancestral ways.

Understanding the relationship between our people and land prior to contact with settlers gives context for the important role of land in language learning. Like other Indigenous peoples, we are told that our languages and our connection to our land and culture are defeated or dying. But, this is not the case. Our people have a worldview connected to the vitality of the land we live in and have understood these connections for a long time. Over the duration of my Master's program, it occurred to me that I have had many conversations about land and our connections to it, including almost every time I sat with my father, Gordon Edwards.

Kwthunu men 'my father' has lived in our community his entire life and can remember a time when he was able to count the houses of the people living in Snaw'naw'as. He is the current elected chief of Snaw'naw'as and has been on Council since 1976. He can recall memories of our family members going back decades, and I love listening to his stories of growing up with a house full of siblings. We discussed the ideas leading up to and about this project from July 2020 to the present. It is important to me that his stories are included in this writing because I believe these stories shape an understanding of our land as a community. I hope they highlight our long-standing connections with and understandings of our land as the cornerstone of our identity as snaw'naw'as *mustimuxw* 'people'. Without the awareness of this worldview, I believe a project connecting language and land becomes just that, a surface level project about sounds and language. My hope is to show how our knowledge system, that exists within our community from thousands of years of knowing, is grounded in the land and is a central part of this project.

Kwthunu men described this system of generational transmission of knowledge as being intrinsic, as outlined this by the following story about his childhood:

In the bay there was always lots of driftwood - as kids, we would float the logs towards the ducks. There used to be hundreds of ducks in our bay. So I know at one time, there must have been thousands of ducks. We would hide behind the logs so we could approach the ducks and when we got close enough, we would grab their feet.

He discussed this as “natural beach behaviour” that he and many of his siblings would do together. He said as kids they must have thought “Hey! If we stay behind this log, I wonder how close we could get to the ducks?” He emphasized how no one told them to do this and that, to some, it may look like play, but in fact was a natural process of practicing hunting skills and learning how to sneak up on animals. They were following a natural instinct of learning how to provide for themselves. Play was a part of learning and interacting with the environment, and he described this interaction as being instinctual and part of a legacy of knowledge passed on to us by our ancestors.

His stories reminded me of the significance of starting my work through a lens of curiosity and play. In a sense, by just engaging with my ancestral lands, I would tap into our intrinsic understanding of our knowledge systems. I needed to understand this process so that I could pick up my own piece of driftwood from the beach and grab the feet of my own ducks, and in doing so I would be accessing the inspiration for language from my Elders and our ancestors.

I have been frequently told the importance of understanding how our people used the land prior to contact with settlers. *Kwthunu men* would talk to me about the immediate area around our village site as well as the breadth in which we used to travel throughout Vancouver Island, the Salish Sea and the mainland. He stressed the importance of us knowing that we used to live at the head of the bay in Snaw'naw'as, but also to understand the extent to which our families would travel throughout the year.

If you look at placements of villages across the land, we were always close to a river or creek so that we could fish. We were there because fish were in abundance - our access to fish is important because it is part of who we are. We would hunt in the estuary because the deer would come down into that area. We lived there because it was well designed for living. Our table of food was the beach and when the tide went out, the table was set. We knew that was the best place to be.

Our Snaw'naw'as village was located at the head of Nanoose Bay and was an area of abundant resources. The name for this area is *K'ik'ellexen* 'little fence or weir.' We knew where to go for a variety of foods from the land, sea and sky. We had and still have a strong knowledge of these resources from thousands of years of knowledge passed on to us.

Kwthunu men also spoke about how we were thoughtfully established in an area where we could easily access the Notch, or Nanoose Bay Hill. This hill gave us direct protection from wind in the area and offered fine visibility of the Salish Sea entering into the bay. This area was used for security so that we could see who was approaching. Many people would come in from the North and being able to see them from afar gave us an advantage. Our ancestors were brilliant in their understanding of the strategic placements of our villages in relation to the land of Snaw'naw'as. This is why this area was chosen as an opportune place to live.

As my father and I discussed where we situated ourselves as a community prior to contact, I considered these locations in light of my project. These locations, the beach, rivers, forest and mountains, were places that I felt would be good places to explore the sounds of our land. The conversations I had with my dad confirmed these decisions as places of significance: the placement of the creek at the head of the bay for fishing, the beach for food and travel, the Notch for safety and the forest as a place for animals such as deer to live so that they could come

up and graze in our estuary so we could cleverly hunt them. All of the land in this area is an incredible place for us to live and is an incredible place for us to speak and learn our hul'q'umi'num' language.

I like to think of our language work as being a part of our connections to the land. There is a strong understanding in our community about the importance of our language, as there is an understanding of our relational ties to the land. Pulling this information together and weaving its place back into our lives is the heart of this project. Considering our technical descriptions of pronunciation within the context of our inherent knowledge systems of the land is an unused approach within hul'q'umi'num' language learning. Our land can help teach us our language.

2.3 Situating the Language

The fluent speaking Elders I have had the opportunity to learn from have all stressed the importance of pronunciation. I have heard many times that it is important to get the sounds right, and this was an area of focus in these lessons. The emphasis on pronunciation has been expressed by other Salish language learners because it is integral to maintain the accurate sounds of our languages (PENÁĆ, 2017). This focus is necessary when learning our language because of the long-standing disruption to natural language transmission caused by residential schools (Dunlop et al., 2018). My grandfather did not speak hul'q'umi'num' to the family because of the shame he was taught to feel through his residential school experience. Without the benefit of intergenerational transmission and the everyday prevalence of our language, we are no longer able to acquire our language naturally. Therefore, we need as many language supports around us as possible.

It is particularly challenging to speak hul'q'umi'num' because of the large amount of hul'q'umi'num' sounds that are not found in English. The training I have from my music degree

has given me the ability to identify sounds and rhythms, but it has still been difficult learning the hul'q'umi'num' sounds and reproduction has not come naturally. I originally believed that these sounds would form on their own, but this has never happened. I have needed an incredible amount of repetition and reminders in my speaking in order to develop the proper muscles to pronounce these sounds with accuracy. As a result, I have made use of a variety of resources to learn the sounds, including support from texts, on-line materials and the more experienced speakers in my life.

There are two main areas for support in hul'q'umin'um: print and on-line materials. The Phonics Workbook by Gerds & Hinkson (1996) was created in consultation with Elders from Snaw'naw'as, Stz'uminus, and Snuneymuxw along with School District 68. One of those Elders is *kwthunu silu'alh* 'my late grandfather', Leonard Edwards. This workbook takes the learner through a series of listening, speaking and writing activities, but without knowing how the words sound, using this was tedious and difficult. I have since located the recordings that accompany this book, but I did not know they existed at the time.

The Hul'q'umi'num' Language & Culture Society (2016) have online resources that include audio clips and descriptions of the hul'q'umi'num' sounds. This resource was and continues to be helpful, but I felt like I was not making the connections to the sounds in a way that had me remembering how to speak them correctly, especially when I was away from the computer.

My *sqa'aq* 'younger brother' Jessie helped me navigate the hul'q'umi'num' sounds at the early stages of my language learning. The subtleties of the sounds were such a challenge for me to hear because they were so new, and this made acquisition of the language a slow and sometimes frustrating process. During the first year of the Mentor/Apprentice Program,

supported through the First Peoples' Cultural Council, I spent a lot of time working on individual sounds with my Mentor, Colleen Manson. One of our activities in that first year was to incorporate the use of domain learning and focus on high frequency words in the house. As I have three children, a frequent discussion in my house is on brushing teeth and so the word toothbrush was included on our word list. The hul'q'umi'num' word for toothbrush is *shth'xwul'nusum*. This word starts with four consonant sounds in a row: *sh*, *th*, *'*, and *xw*. At this time, I was struggling to produce even single sounds on their own correctly, and so this word felt like a struggle to reproduce accurately. Without a strong understanding of producing these sounds, this word was not accessible to me.

I am fortunate to have the support of Jessie and Colleen, but I came to the realization that not everyone would have this support readily available to them. I remember thinking *What else could I or any beginner use to learn the sounds independently?* but there did not seem to be any other supports.

I know that I am not alone in the continued struggle for the proper development of the sounds of our language and that more supports in this area would be welcomed. With my experience in teaching music, I know that it is very easy to change the sound of how someone plays their instrument by using imagery to illustrate a sound connection. I have used ideas like “think of a sad moment and play it again” or “play as though you are in an open field and no one else is around.” The use of imagery in this way creates an instant connection to an idea while leaving out technical descriptions. It can also be uplifting for learners as they get a sense that they are in control of their own development. With this in mind, I am looking to make connections to our language in ways that a learner can understand and carry with them when they are away from the direct support of a speaker or an online tool.

I believe that making a connection to something we understand deeply as a community, like our land, will bring a stronger connection to our hul'q'umi'num' sounds. Hopefully, this will cut down on the length of time it takes to learn these sounds accurately so that learners can focus on the larger understanding of the language and speak confidently. It is my intention to make pronunciation more accessible so our language can be proudly enjoyed by future generations. To accomplish this, I invited speakers from our community to help create a tool that connects the relationship between our land and language. In order to accomplish this in the best, most culturally appropriate way possible, the following section will discuss the literature of Indigenous language revitalization and look specifically at Indigenous worldviews, land-based learning and pronunciation.

3. Literature Review

In this section I will discuss the significance of our relationships to land within Indigenous worldviews and connect this to showing how land is part of those relationships. I will highlight how other programs and language activists are interacting with land in their language learning experiences. I will then discuss how land-based learning is connected to the understanding of our languages and discuss how, within work on pronunciation specifically, there is room to develop resources that bring together land-based learning and pronunciation.

3.1 Land and land-based pedagogy in ILR

Indigenous worldviews are often represented and explained within the context of our relationships (Absolon, 2011; Cardinal, 2001; Edōsdi, 2018; Kovach, 2009; Wilson, 2008). Absolon & Willet (2005) explain Indigenous thinking as “holistic, circular and relational” (p. 10). They explain these concepts by discussing how knowledge belongs with the self and the experiences we create within our interactions with the earth. These holistic views of the world and knowledge systems based on our relationships are shown in our interactions between language, culture and the understandings of our Ancestors (Edōsdi, 2018). Understanding the holistic nature of our relationships and interactions between language, culture and our ancestors is foundational to understanding and learning Indigenous languages. Rorick (2019) discusses how her language, nuučaanuł, contains information about the people and the world around us, stating “Our language itself holds a knowledge and understanding of the nuučaanuł world, including how we approach relationships with others and with our environment” (p. 231). This discussion furthers our understanding of relationality by considering the place of land within the learning of our Indigenous languages.

In order for Indigenous language learning to be most effective, it must be contextualized in the culture. According to McCarty (2018), language learning must be centered “on the people, the community, not on *‘the language’* as a disembodied entity” (p. 31). Our resources need to reflect what is important to the people and the culture and be represented in a way that speaks to the community. This has been shown in the work of Engman and Hermes (2021) where Annishnabe worldview is encompassed within land-based learning. The importance of Annishnabe worldview can be seen in the interactions between the language learners and the Elders through language learning walks in the forest. The learners ask questions about what the land presents to them, and the Elders respond with stories of cultural significance. This type of reciprocal learning brings a multifaceted approach that engages learners with a deeper understanding of their language. This experience of being on the land in the language is an experience that cannot be reproduced in a classroom setting.

Jansen, Underriner and Jacob (2013) also discuss the importance of placed-based education that is culturally significant. They stress the importance of learning in and with the community using a seasonal approach that embraces the environment. They find that this style of learning results in learners not just understanding their language but also the worldview and legacy of their ancestors.

The importance of relationships with the land is outlined by PENÁĆ (2017) in a very concrete way, in his discussions of the reverence of weather patterns and the meaning of his SENĆOTEN name. In his writing, he reflects that the relationship with land, more specifically optimal weather, is essential for travel and compares this to learning SENĆOTEN under optimal learning environments. This is essential in our understanding of how to navigate Indigenous

Language Revitalization. We can learn our languages by prioritizing activities in which we engage with our own worldviews and relationships.

To better understand Indigenous Worldviews and Knowledge Systems, there has been a resurgence of incorporating land-based knowledge into learning. We see this through the resurgence of land based learning in programs at universities such as [UBC](#)², [UVIC](#)³ and [VIU](#)⁴. These programs embrace outdoor learning and show the significance of our relationship to the land. The [Dechinta Bush University](#)⁵ in Yellowknife, NWT, offers programming centered on reconnecting with the land. Through year-round seasonal activities such as hunting, fishing and gathering, learners are provided an opportunity to learn Indigenous based practices. These programs promote bringing participants physically to the natural world so that they can experience Indigenous knowledge systems in the way the land intended for us to learn.

Similarly, Simpson (2014) highlights Nishnaabeg stories that show the importance of reinstating the relationship of land in our learning. These stories show that “If you want to about learn something, you need to take your body onto the land and do it” (p. 17). When land is pedagogy, it becomes more than just a venue for learning. Instead, it is included as voice or a partner within the process of learning and creates significant meaning between language, land and learner.

Many Indigenous authors also showcase the land and our relationship to it. In particular, land is often featured in Indigenous children’s literature. Within this literature, land-based books include knowledge of our land, culture and seasonal activities as well as of an accompanying Indigenous language (Campbell, 2017; Campbell 2021; Prince 2021; Robertson, 2021). For

² <https://www.calendar.ubc.ca/vancouver/index.cfm?tree=12,197,282,1651>

³ <https://www.uvic.ca/humanities/departments/indigenous-studies/index.php>

⁴ <https://indigenous.viu.ca/land-based-traditional-teaching>

⁵ <https://www.dechinta.ca/>

example, Newman-Ting (2021) feature Kwakwa'la language in their book through a land-based adventure. Learners of all ages benefit from the land as being central to learning.

Indigenous Language Revitalization programs are already including land-based learning into their programming. This is seen through the work of Rorick (2019), Engman and Hermes (2021), Jansen, Underriner and Jacob (2013), and others. This work highlights the benefits of viewing language learning on the land and honours the relational aspects between land, participants and people. The land becomes our greatest supporter and upholds our work in language and reminds us to speak every time we step outside. Land, language and culture need to work together to engage all elements of comprehensive programming

3.2 Pronunciation and Indigenous language learning

The goal of this MILR project is to apply land-based learning to pronunciation specifically, something that has not been done before. Pronunciation plays an important role in Indigenous language revitalization because we are no longer surrounded by our languages on a daily basis.

In interviews with SENĆOTEN speakers, Bird and Kell discussed the importance of encouraging learners to maintain the integrity of pronunciation (2017). This is an important reminder from our Elders that the way in which we say something carries meaning, and it is important to remain genuine when we are speaking our languages. Furthermore, as speakers, one of the first things we are critiqued on is how our speaking patterns compare to those of our Elders (Bliss et al., 2018). We need to focus on pronunciation because it upholds standards for speaking and, because of this, it needs to be taught intentionally. I propose that the best way to do this is by engaging with the land.

The most difficult aspect of pronunciation is navigating our complex sounds in hul'q'umi'num', especially in a world where we are surrounded by English in our daily lives.

However, pronunciation is not always seen as an area of focus for beginning language learning and few approaches exist to assist with the acquisition of these sounds. (Bliss et al., 2018; Bird & Kell, 2017). Foote et al. (2016) talk about how pronunciation is often neglected as an isolated area of instruction in language lessons and the approach that is usually taken is one where pronunciation is left to be developed over time.

There are some examples in Indigenous languages of explicit teaching approaches when it comes to pronunciation. One technique for learning pronunciation is to incorporate counting into a daily routine. By saying the numbers from 1-10 in hul'q'umin'um we are exposed to all of the sounds of the language. This technique is shared by teachers and learners of other Salish languages and is discussed by PENÁĆ (2017) in his approach to learning SENĆOŦEN. Instead of limiting the technique to the typical 10 numbers, he expands his approach by counting 1-100 and introducing the element of speed to his practice. This exercise is useful in preparing the mouth to speak by warming up the speaking muscles in the mouth, much like a musician would prior to performing. When we go to speak, our mouth is ready, and it makes communication easier. This technique is effective, and it can be done individually anywhere and at any time.

On the more technical side of pronunciation learning, some techniques focus on using technology to help visualize how to pronounce sounds. For example, Bliss et al. (2018) used lingual ultrasound imaging to show where articulation of consonant sounds occur within the mouth cavity. Ultrasound pictures of Elders' tongue positions were taken so speakers could use this as a guide to help develop their own pronunciation. Isolating the areas of articulation and creating visuals for reference can be very helpful to learners. The advantage of this technique is being able to see exactly where in the mouth to place the tongue and to be able to cross reference your own positioning.

Another technique for developing pronunciation skills involves visual displays of acoustic signals (Bird & Miyashita, 2018). For example, Herrick et al. (2015) use visual illustrations to help Cherokee learners develop tone. Similarly, Fish and Miyashita (2017) support second language learners to speak with correct accents and melody by creating visual representations of pitch. These supports show what the language should sound like, both audibly and visually, and have been critical for learners to correctly imitate L1 speakers.

There is a relationship between language and land, in particular with the sounds of our language. For example, Baloy (2011) discusses the words of Squamish Chief, X̱álek'a about the uniqueness of the sounds of our Salish languages.

The harshness of our language... I realized that it's the shape of our land. When the winds hit our mountains and they come over, they drop into the valleys, they kind of move around the forest. That's kind of the structure of the language - it has a lot of sharp inflections like that (p. 524).

If this is the case, then we need to consider this relationship when looking at techniques to teach pronunciation. We can highlight a sense of understanding of our languages' sounds through the knowledge of our land and encourage learners to hear hul'q'umi'num' spoken to us every time we step outside. Placing this understanding within pronunciation development brings us outside to interact with the land, so that we can surround ourselves with our language.

3.3 Summary and Research Gaps

Looking at the techniques being used for teaching and learning pronunciation, although they are useful and important, none of them take advantage of a holistic, land-based approach to learning. Yet, Wildcat et al. (2014) discuss in their article that "If we are serious about education and educating people within frameworks of Indigenous intelligence, we must find ways of reinserting

people into relationships with and on the land as a mode of education” (p. 2). Connections with the land are an integral piece of education and there is much to be learned within the context of these relationships.

Within Indigenous worldviews, there is an importance on the role of our relationships with the land. Therefore, our relationship to the land should be an important area of focus for language learning. Bringing our Snaw'naw'as relationships and knowledge of the land to the forefront of our teaching methods brings culturally significant language tools to guide new speakers. Many people talk about how our language comes from the land, but after a thorough search within the literature, no research has been done on the connections between learning from the land and pronunciation. By bringing together these two important areas of language learning, we can give tools to learners to understand their relationship to hul'q'umi'num' through their knowledge of the land in a way that has not been done before.

4. Research topic and question

This research project is about creating videos that show the parallels between sounds in the language and sounds on the land. Through these videos learners will experience the relationship our language has with our land and see that benefits of including land as a speaking partner. It will give us support for the everyday relevance of hul'q'umi'num' language use. The sounds are already in our lives, we know them, and the understanding of our relationships to these sounds can help develop hul'q'umi'num' pronunciation. All we have to do is step outside and listen. The research question that guides my MILR project is: *How can we incorporate connections with land into our pronunciation learning*. This question was answered through the creation of videos that connected the recordings of sounds found on the land to the consonant sounds in hul'q'umi'num'.

5. Methodology

Of all the teachings we receive

this one is the most important:

Nothing belongs to you

of what there is,

of what you take,

you must share.

(George, 1996, p. 25)

The above quote by Chief Dan George encompasses my understanding of my methodology, *nuća'maat*, and I include it here to help articulate my understandings of this word. During a process of reflecting on what guides my language work I remember thinking in moments of uncertainty, “what am I even doing?”. What proceeded was an imaginary conversation with my Aunt Carrie. I felt that she reminded me that I already knew and that I didn't really need to be asking. This helped me understand that everything my family has taught me has become a part of this work. Over time I have discovered that my methods live inside the teachings from my *shxwuwéli* ‘relatives’. I know my methods because I live them, and they have been taught to me since I was a child. Whether this is participating in our work as a family, serving Elders food as a child or sitting and talking with my Aunties, what guides me in my work is the presence of my cultural teachings.

Nuća'maat

My methodology is rooted in the hul'q'umi'num' word *nuća'maat*. This word loosely translates as “working together”. I can see this word reflected in the large support I have from my family

and the way that I seek their knowledge, guidance, and approval. I have seen this word in action in my community through countless ceremonies and gatherings and watching how our family supports each other. It is this word that I know without having to ask its meaning. When I consider the influence this word brings to my language learning, it essentially has guided me to understand that I do not work alone.

When I returned home to learn hul'q'umi'num', I connected with the other language learners in my family. These people include members of my family from three different Salish communities: Qualicum, Snaw'naw'as and Snuneymuxw. I include my children in this circle as well because we cannot neglect their expertise. Anytime I need support with our language, it is this circle of people that I turn to. Our work is most effective when we are together. They support me when I am on the right path and gently correct when needed. I turn to them for knowledge, sharing ideas, and the occasional belly laugh. I hope to do the same and become a support for others who are reclaiming language. Including intergenerational learning and understanding is what I believe to be a part of this teaching and so it is vital I include this understanding in my language work.

This knowing has been described by Shawn Wilson (2008) as relationality, or the foundation of knowledge belonging to the greater collective of people, not the individual. He furthers the concept of relationality by including our natural environment in these reciprocal relationships. It is this concept I hope will be clearly seen in this project, family working together, valuing the knowledge from all generations and supporting one another as we strengthen our connections and relationships to land and language together.

6. Methods

In order to create the eight pronunciation videos I visited places within our hul'q'umin'um' speaking territory and listened and recorded sounds. Consonant sounds were chosen from these sounds from a resource within our community and speakers of different ages were asked to participate. The footage was put together to create 1-2 minute videos that focus on the relationship between one consonant sound and one sound from the land.

Before starting the eight pronunciation videos, I reflected on music composition and the role land can play in the creation of music. My background in music has encouraged me to draw inspiration from the role land plays in music composition. Since music is sometimes referred to as a language, I wondered if there were composers who featured the relationship of land and sound in their work. The Canadian composer, R.Murray Schafer (National Film Board, 2017) teaches about these relationships through his Soundscape compositions. Schafer is known for his compositions that feature music as a reflection of one's acoustical environment, such as his piece *Music for Wilderness Lake* (The Contemporary Austin, 2014). This piece uses the sounds of the environment to accompany the music written for trombone. In the same way, this is what I have done: stepped outside in our hul'q'umi'num' territory and listened. I recorded what I heard and drew connections to our language in a similar way that Schafer listened to sounds and incorporated them into his compositions.

6.1 Speakers

Keeping *nu'ca'maat* at the center of this work, it was important to include different experiences of language speakers in this resource. To do this, the original plan for the videos was to have four different generations of speakers: 1) L1 speaking Elders 2) L2 speaking Elders 3) L2 speaking adults and 4) L2 speaking children. The speakers were chosen among people I have already been

working with on language and others I know to be working on language. While the majority of them are Snaw'naw'as, speakers were also chosen from our adjacent communities, Snuneymuxw and Qualicum. Currently, due to circumstances beyond my control, I have not been able to include the L1 speaking Elder from Snaw'naw'as as originally planned. When the time is right, I will go back and include our Elder's voice in our videos in a future phase of the project.

From Snaw'naw'as the participants included Donna Edwards, Lawrence Mitchell, as well as four children. My Auntie Donna has spent a lot of time creating language resources, and Lawrence is currently enrolled in the hul'q'umi'num' program from SFU. The children involved have learned language at home or from the daycare in our community where Lawrence teaches them hul'q'umi'num'. From Snuneymuxw, Colleen Manson, my hul'q'umi'num' language mentor and a graduate from the SFU hul'q'umi'num' M.A. program is also featured. Carrie Reid (discussed in previous sections as Auntie Carrie), Jessie Recalma and his *stalus* 'partner', Ocean Hyland participated from Qualicum. All three of them are strong advocates of language learning. Jessie and Ocean speak multiple Salish languages. I was so happy to have commitments from all of these speakers to participate in this project, and all of their individual styles of speaking and personalities brought a different perspective and understanding to the learning in the resource.

6.2 Sounds and words

To guide the development of this resource, I used the *Hul'q'umi'num' Phonics* (Gerdt & Hinkson, 1996) resource. This workbook is a resource that the Elders from Snaw'naw'as, Snuneymuxw and Stz'uminus communities contributed to. My late grandfather was a part of its development and I believe that our continuing hul'q'umi'num' work needs to stem from the materials left by our community Elders.

Within the hul'q'umi'num' Phonics booklet there are five different categories of phonetic sounds, they are divided up as follows: *easy sounds* (sounds found in English); *front of the mouth sounds* (sounds that do not occur in English and are pronounced with the front of the tongue); *back of the mouth sounds* (sounds that do not occur in English and are pronounced with the back of the tongue); *glottalized sounds* (“popping” sounds); and *consonant clusters* (words with clusters of sounds not found in English). The focus will be on *back of the mouth sounds* (see Table 1) and select *front of the mouth sounds* (see Table 2) as these are the sounds not found in English that need the most support at the beginning of language learning. Understanding these sounds will help with later work on *glottalized sounds* and *consonant clusters*.

Table 1. Unit 3 - Back of the mouth sounds (Gerdt & Hinkson, 1996)

Example consonant sounds and words associated with each sound.

kw	xw	q	qw	ǰ	ǰw
kwasun ‘star’	xwunítum ‘white	qeq ‘baby’	qwunus ‘whale’	ǰthum ‘box’	ǰwum ‘fast’
kwunut ‘take’	person’	qul ‘bad’	qwal ‘talk’	luwuǰ ‘rib’	ǰwechenum ‘run’
kweel ‘hide’	xwiwul ‘come	muqsun ‘nose’	haqwum ‘smell’	quluǰ ‘salmon	luǰwtun ‘blanket’
kwintul	forward’	nuqum ‘dive’	nuqw ‘fall	eggs’	sǰwesum ‘soapberry’
‘fight’	snuxwulh ‘canoe’	yiq ‘snow’	asleep”	quǰ ‘lots’	
skweyul ‘sky’	mustímuxw ‘person’			ǰeem ‘cry’	
	kwumluxw ‘root’				

Table 2. Unit 2 - Front of the Mouth Sounds (Gerds & Hinkson, 1996)

Example consonant and words associated with each sound.

lh	tl'
lhuptun 'eyelash'	tl'elhum 'salt'
lheel 'come ashore'	tl'itl'up 'deep'
lhultun 'bailer'	tl'eqt 'long'
shelh 'road, path'	quy'atl'an 'slug'
netulh 'morning'	

6.3 Process

I considered four different environments for the videos: *cecuw* 'beach'; *thuthiqut* 'forest'; *smeent* 'mountain'; *stolo* 'river', and I visited these sites within hul'q'umi'um' speaking territory throughout the year. Within each environment I collected sounds, much like one would collect berries in a basket. Each sound was assessed and compared to the consonant sounds within the above charts.

I wanted the sounds to be easy to reproduce or to be found naturally within the environment for accessibility to all learners. For example, the *lh* sound resembles the sound of digging in sand, which would be an easy sound to reproduce just by going to the beach or from memory. Table 3 describes the connections of consonant sounds to land sounds that were used and further connections between sound in the language and sounds of the land are described in the results section.

The preliminary plan was to have all of our speakers together in each video, at the different sites of significance within our hul'q'umi'num' Territory from Qualicum to Snuneymuxw. However, organizing this proved to be difficult from the beginning due to illness, opposing work schedules, and the general availability of the speakers. It made more sense to meet speakers at a time they suggested, in a place of their convenience. Letting go of my original plan to drive and hike to places of significance within our territory resulted in Nanoose Bay being the background for many of our videos, which ended up being a beautiful way to honour our community.

To record the sounds, I went on many walks and visits to the chosen sites. I sat and listened before recording a number of different sounds using the video function on my iPhone and iPad. I used the same technology, the video function on both my iPhone and iPad, to record the speakers. I added extra recordings using the audio recording app on my iPhone as well as a Zoom audio recorder for the first set of recordings. The audio recordings were added in hopes of minimizing the sound of the wind. I found the additional audio recordings to not be necessary and discontinued using this after the first set of speakers. I wanted to keep the technology simple, mostly to show that it can be done using readily available technology. In order to make the videos, I used Adobe Rush, which is a free video editing program. I found there was enough editing options with those technologies to make the comparison between land and language and even some room to play with volume levels to cut down on background noise.

7. Results

The final product for this pronunciation resource is a series of 8 videos⁶ that are each approximately 1-2 minutes in length. Each video features one hul'q'umi'num' consonant sound, paired with one sound from the land. In each video, we hear (and see) speakers saying the isolated consonant sound as well as a small word list that features the sound. The videos also include the speakers explaining how they make the consonant sound, i.e., how they shape their mouth to pronounce the sound properly. The sounds of the land, descriptions from speakers and pronunciation of consonants and words were arranged in patterns within the videos so as to draw attention to the relationships between the sounds of the land and the language without explicitly stating these relationships.

The biggest change to the videos from what I had planned was having the speakers explain how they created the sounds. This came about after the first recording, in which we naturally talked about how the speakers pronounced the consonant we were focusing on. After that, it felt appropriate to ask all of the speakers to explain how they created the sound. What resulted were descriptions of the sounds, some old and some new, in a way that each speaker thought about them. Some sounds were compared to land forms, such as caves; others were compared to English sounds. For example Carrie Reid states in the *xw* video “that my mouth is hollow, like a cave” and one of the children describes the *lh* sound “make a C sound of it, of the blowing” (in reference to a soft C as in ‘nice’). The descriptions of these sounds from the speakers were both accurate and informative. Some of them were fresh ideas that I have not seen

⁶ Although Uvic Ethics has given approval for sharing the videos with the daycare in Snaw'naw'as, I have also agreed with participants to contact them prior to sharing the videos with the public. Please contact me at finstadt@gmail.com for more information on viewing.

written down in existing descriptions of these sounds. In the following table and the rest of this section I will describe in more detail the content of the videos.

Table 3. hul'q'umin'um' consonant sound to land sound and location of recording

Consonant	Sound	Speakers	Location
xw	small waves	Adult: Carrie Reid Child: Cadence Sam, Rocky Bob	<i>K'ik'elexen</i> head of Nanoose bay
tl'	walking on rocks	Carrie Reid, Rocky Bob, Cadence Sam	Snaw'naw'as and <i>K'ik'elexen</i>
kw	Rain	Carrie Reid, Rocky Bob, Cadence Sam	various locations including Notch Hill
qw	big waves	Adult: Jessie Recalma, Ocean Hyland, Donna Edwards	Qualicum beach and Snaw'naw'as
lh	digging in sand	Adult: Jessie Recalma, Ocean Hyland, Child: Eden Finstad, Sophia Coleman	Kixwemolh and Qilxemaat
ǰ	rapids on the river	Jessie Recalma, Ocean Hyland, Eden Finstad, Sophia Coleman	Kixwemolh
q	fish heads dropping in gut bucket	Adult: Colleen Manson, Lawrence Mitchell Child: Halle Finstad	Snaw'naw'as
ǰw	scooping/splashing water	Colleen Manson, Lawrence Mitchell, Halle Finstad	Stl'itl'up, Snuneymuxw, Snaw'naw'as

xw

This video highlights three L2 speakers and connects the *xw* consonant sound to the sound of smaller waves on the shore. The videos were recorded at the head of Nanoose Bay, less frequently known as *K'ik'elexen* 'little fence or weir' and at the beach within Snaw'naw'as featuring Notch Hill in the background. In this video Carrie Reid describes the consonant sound

xw by comparing her mouth to a hollow like a cave. She also describes how the air comes from the back of her mouth. All three speakers, Carrie, Rocky and Cadence demonstrate the individual consonant sound and the list of words. These sounds, descriptions and words are woven between the sound of small waves on the beach to provide an audible connection between waves and the *xw* consonant.

tl'

This video features Carrie, Rocky and Cadence and connects the *tl'* sound to footsteps on rocks at the beach. The videos were recorded from the same points as the *xw* sound, at *K'ik'elxen* and the beach in Snaw'naw'as, featuring the Notch Hill. Carrie Reid also offers her description of this sound and compares it to the clicking sound of calling a horse. The individual consonant sounds and word list are recorded and woven between the sounds of footsteps on the rocks.

kw

This sound also features the same L2 speakers and were recorded at the same places as *tl'* and *xw*. The position in which Carrie Reid is recorded is changed but she is still recording at *K'ik'elxen*. This sound is a much softer sound and is described in this video as a travelling sound by Carrie. Because of the softer sound and the idea of travelling, this sound is compared to the sound of rain. The sounds of rain are taken from different point of views including the video aimed at the top of trees, rain sound on a small pond and the sound of rain on salal. Rocky Bob, an energetic young man, also offers a bit of humour that I found impossible to remove and provides a light feeling to the video to compliment the light sound of the rain. His laughter and energy are infectious, and it felt natural to leave this in the videos.

qw

The *qw* sound features the sound of larger rolling waves from the beaches of both Qualicum and Snaw'naw'as. Jessie and Ocean were filmed at Qualicum and in the background of the video, you can hear the waves. A little different than the other videos, there was an audio recording of Donna Edwards describing the *qw* sound. Her recording brings attention to the fact that this sound comes from the back of the throat. When I went to record this video with her, we ended up talking for a long time about language, and she shared memories of her dad, my late grandfather. We got to a point where the sun had set and we were both tired so we decided an audio over the top of waves would suffice; this resulted in a video that is unique compared to the others. It turned out to be a welcome change in format.

lh

This video was recorded mostly at *Kixwemolh* 'Englishman River' and *Qilxemaat* 'Craig Bay.' The video features Jessie and Eden both describing their knowledge of how to produce the *lh* sound. Eden describes the production of this sound in very similar ways to Jessie and so the video highlights them co-constructing their descriptions. Also featured in this video is Eden's dog. She felt it was important, as a five-year-old, for her dog to be in the video with her. This was an unplanned addition, and for whatever reason, it works. Ocean and Sophia also join by participating in the individual consonant sounds and the word lists. This sound was compared to the sound of digging or dragging fingers through wet sand at *Kixwemolh*.

ǰ/x

The sound in this video is described by Jessie as a "hard x sound that comes from the back of the throat" and he likens it to a cat hissing. Eden joins in by also describing how she makes the sound from her throat "right here" while she points to the top part of her throat. Again, the two of them create a descriptive and accurate explanation of this sound without being in the same video.

Both Ocean and Sophia join in on the individual consonant sound as well as the word list.

Because of the forceful nature of this sound, the sounds of the rapids on the river are used to draw a comparison to this fast sound.

q

This video features Colleen, Lawrence and Eden. This sound is the only sound that you cannot walk out onto the land and expect to hear. Although I set out to make comparisons that were accessible and easy to reproduce, I couldn't pass up the sound of fish season. I recorded this "land" sound during the sockeye run in August after not having fish in our community for four years. It felt appropriate to celebrate the return of sockeye by including the sounds of dropping fish heads and tails into the gut bucket. This video doesn't have speakers saying the individual consonant sound because the sound made by dropping the fish heads into the bucket seems to speak well for itself. When paired with the spoken word list, the relationship is quite clear. This video also includes a narrative by Lawrence on his memories of my late grandparent. I wasn't quite sure where to put this, but on remembering my grandmother's love for fish head soup, it was evident that it belonged in this video.

ǰw

The *ǰw* video features Colleen, Lawrence and Halle. This video is filmed in Snaw'naw'as but also Snuneymuxw territory where Colleen is from. The *ǰw* sound is compared to the sound of scooping water in the ocean. This sound is described by Colleen as being similar to the *x* sound but with rounded lips. Some of the consonant sounds in hul'q'umi'num' include a 'w' with them to indicate the rounding of the lips, which also makes the sound a bit deeper. The word list and consonant sounds are spoken by all three speakers. The fun part of this video is the puppet and

the bright coloured paper Colleen is holding with the consonant sound (also found in the *q* video). I liked this addition as Colleen expressed that she wanted the video to be fun and bright.

The creation of the videos was a relatively seamless process, and I was surprised at how well everything came together. The only area of difficulty that came up was with sound quality in the recordings. Because I wanted to complete this project using readily available materials, the levels from speakers were difficult to balance. Also, dealing with background noise and wind in the recording was challenging and was distracting in the videos. Although Adobe Rush has a feature to balance sound and cut down on background noise, it wasn't always enough.

Sharing the preliminary videos people for editing purposes, I found it incredibly interesting that the videos had all viewers accurately saying the consonant sounds unprompted. I had always heard that our language was difficult, in particular with reference to these consonant sounds, but the videos instantly guided the viewers to accurately pronounce these sounds. I realised that if the unfinished and unpolished videos already had people articulating the sounds accurately, this resource will be successful.

There will be many situations where this resource will be valuable to new language learners. What we have committed to, myself and the participants, is to share them with the daycare in Snaw'naw'as as a starting point. Further distribution and usage of these videos is currently undecided.

8. Reflections on creating a pronunciation resource

The more my thoughts developed and changed as I engaged with the land, the more I understood the importance of how all of the pieces of my project worked together: the voices, the learners, the community, the language, the land and the culture work together. It reminded me of my understanding of Western music and the importance of instruments being in tune with each other. When tunings are in alignment and all working together, notes that are not actually being played can be heard. This connection had me considering the deeper meaning of *nu'ca'maat* and how when we are all working together the work starts to carry itself. It is in this understanding that I see how Language Revitalization is best supported by community and where my new understandings of this work begin. Listening to our collective voices work together helped me hear and see things that were not intended. This has changed my focus from being exclusively centered on land-based learning and pronunciation to connecting with community, land and culture through our language. This shift in thinking has changed my understanding of the importance of the collective, of all of our voices working together and the word *nu'ca'maat*.

Margaret Kovach (2009) describes collectivity as part of the organization of Indigenous societies. She highlights the importance of Nehiyaw knowledge by emphasizing community-based interconnectedness as central to their ways of knowing. Similarly, I consider all of the speakers' thoughts that are woven into the video, either directly or indirectly, as being the most significant part of this work. We have collectively contributed to this resource in a way that is fluid and intergenerational. There were many discussions, thoughts and ideas as we all spoke and shared knowledge together and seamlessly demonstrated the collective nature of *nu'ca'maat*, making me increasingly uncomfortable to have my name on the front of this work.

As I met with each participant, I heard stories of our late family members and how the language work they left us is vital to our current understanding of our language. One of my cousins reminded me that, at one time, our community was front and center of hul'q'umi'num' language work because of the strong dedication of our Elders. Another reminded me of how much the printed materials of hul'q'umi'num' language have been an important contribution of our late Elders. Even in this project these materials have been a significant resource and reference.

In the beginning of this project, I thought one of my main ideas was to collect sounds, like one collects berries, and felt this was the most important part of this work. What I now understand to be the most important part of this project is working together, similar to the way that we prepare for Ceremony and is an important understanding of our methodology, *nu'ca'maat*. We each brought a piece of knowledge, and our collective energy created this work. I thought about our preparations for Ceremonies that we do together as family, and in particular, with preparing giveaways. Each of us brought what we have and know how to do, jarred fish, blackberry jam, homemade earrings, placed in baskets and piled in the center. I imagine this work being placed on the floor like we do after our work is complete and gifting away our collective knowledge to our extended relatives and friends.

As I explored our territory, especially during the spring, I learned a lot about local plants. I wasn't intending this to be part of this project, but it makes sense in hindsight that if I was going to be on the land, then I would learn more about it. The diversity of the plants in this area and their many uses, both nutritional and medicinal, became a topic of discussion during some of the recording sessions. I was surprised at how much more I noticed and thought about plants

after these interactions. There were two plants in particular that stood out to me, and I will share my learning and thoughts as an extension of this project.

The first plant that I was happy to identify was *speenxw* ‘camas’. Although I knew about *speenxw*, I had not actually seen it. When it came up this spring, I got a message from Jessie and Ocean telling me that it was up and where I would find it. I set out to this destination, one that I have frequented, and was surprised that I had never noticed it before. It puzzled me that at one time it was such prevalent food source but now it is hard to find, or at least uncommon. I have yet to eat it or see it served. I thought of the sounds that would have been made around the harvesting and preparation of this food source. I imagined rich sounds such as digging, gathering the bulbs in a basket, preparing the fire pit and cooking them, and the rich sounds of our hul’q’umi’num’ language. I wondered if I could have used any of these sounds in my project.



Figure 1. *Speenxw* ‘camas’ in bloom.

One plant spoke to me about language learning and stood out to me because I found it growing in a stagnant pool in the rock at *Kixwemolh* ‘Englishman River’. Its white flower caught my eye. I remember considering why it would be growing in that particular place because,

seemingly there were no other plants around it. I learned that this plant is *tushnets* ‘Saskatoon berry’. I didn’t know this plant grew here and what was even more interesting was that once I learned its name, I couldn’t stop seeing it in other places. I have gone back to this plant since to observe as the berries ripen. What I drew from observing this particular plant is that our language can sustain itself in unexpected places. We can learn a lot from the tenacity of this plant; I imagined it saying something like “Do I want to grow? I will, right here.” It didn’t wait or ask to be moved to richer soil and a better environment; its environment was not a factor for not growing. It started right where it was and decided to establish itself.



Figure 3. *Tushnets* ‘saskatoon berry’ in bloom.



Figure 4. *Tushnets* ripened berries.

As I was reflecting on the process of this project, I happened to have a conversation with my six-year-old nephew that reminded me about the importance of community in language programming. He told me about his desire to be a soccer player when he grows up and I told him that I want to speak hul’q’umi’num’ when I grow up. I asked his advice on how I could make this happen. He thought for a second and replied saying I needed to think about two things: I should get a job at the band hall, and I needed to ask for help from Aunty Carrie. I stopped and

laughed, because without any further discussion, this wonderful six-year-old reminded me I needed to work within my community and my family. This is one of the first things I remember learning in our first MILR course, and it felt appropriate that this learning was reflected back to me by this young man at the end of the program.

McCarty (2018) discusses the importance of community language planning that centers the learning on the people, not just the language itself. I found that by centering this resource on the voices of our community, I learned and developed my understanding of our land, language and culture and, most importantly, I have strengthened the relationships with the people involved. What I can see now is that our land is part of these relationships, our *xexe tumuxw* ‘sacred land’ has been included as a voice and has come alongside the other speakers in this resource to support the learning and continued love of our hul’q’umi’num’ language. This is what I believe is the culmination of this project, a piece that is reflective of our community values and family expertise that exhibits a love for our land and language.

9. Conclusion

This MILR project is a culmination of my learning about best practices in Indigenous language revitalization and assessing the needs of hul'q'umi'num' learning tools. I found that there could be more tools to support speakers in the acquisition of our phonetic sounds, especially through a holistic lens. Considering what I had learned from other Elders and speakers in my life as well as considering my community and our extended connections to our land, I decided the best way to do this was to bring land-based learning and pronunciation together to support the learning of our consonant sounds in hul'q'umi'num'.

What was created was a series of eight videos that included sounds of our land and speakers saying corresponding hul'q'umi'num' consonant sounds and words. These were edited together to create a comparison of our sounds to the sounds within the environment. Descriptions of how these consonant sounds are formed or other comparisons were also included.

This project brought many hul'q'umi'num' speakers, our family from three communities, together in one resource that represents our collected knowledge to help strengthen our language. Through this process I discovered more about our language, land, culture and family and understood on a deeper level the meaning of *nu'ca'maat*. I could see many connections of how we work together and understood the importance of our collective knowledge. By observing sounds throughout the seasons and being on the land strengthened my knowledge of local plants. Learning with my family and watching our collective knowledge take shape into a resource that supports our language was a highlight for me in this project. Mostly, this project is a reminder of the strong *xwulmuxw* 'first nations' people in my family and of our collective strength that I am so proud to be a part of. I hope that speakers will benefit from this project as we move closer to understanding that our language, as my grandfather reminded me years ago, is easy.

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