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**‘Rethinking Indigenous Christianity in Northwest Canada:  
Perspectives from the Nuu-chah-nulth’**

David Han

OCMS, MPhil. /Ph.D.

August 2019

**ABSTRACT**

The Nuu-chah-nulth origin myths, potlatches, feasts and ceremonies such as the *tloo-qwah-nah* offer a view of their social and religious structure. This research focusses on the form of Indigenous Christianity from Northwest Canada and attempts to represent the perspective of Nuu-chah-nulth people.

The study shows that the Nuu-chah-nulth culture and religious traditions are in many ways synonymous, and this makes it possible to see the origin and formation of their religious ideas through cultural sources. The findings are based on the primary source of written records, archives, and interviews. At the centre of the study lies the inquiry of how each aspect of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture gives an understanding of their religious ideas and how they compare with Christian theology, to re-imagine the gospel narrative for the Nuu-chah-nulth as part of a larger narrative of Christianity in the cultural contexts of Indigenous peoples.

The main agency for change in the religious, social and communal realms was through the compulsory attendance in Indian Residential Schools. Christian mission and the colonial government played an important role in this. Despite the experience of the residential schools, Christian traditions were still delivered to the Nuu-chah-nulth. However, their conversion to Christ did not displace traditional spirituality. Their religious concepts were not known, but the origin myths provide an image of the creator *N'aas* who appears to display their cultural characteristics and offers a balance to an all-powerful image of God in the Christian religion. The dynamics of community-centred culture manifests itself in their understanding of the nature of God. The Nuu-chah-nulth notion of kinship which encompasses all beings and nature contributes to a more holistic theology and the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth way of life lived in community informs a distinctive Christology and ecclesiology.

This study calls for a re-evaluation of the Christian missionary approaches to traditional indigenous communities of Northwest Canada and invites to the re-examination of theoretical concepts of religion in light of presented Nuu-chah-nulth religious phenomena.









‘Rethinking Indigenous Christianity of Northwest Canada:  
Perspectives from the Nuu-chah-nulth’

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Oxford Centre for Mission Studies








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Other sources are acknowledged by mid-notes or footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| AFN    | Assembly of First Nations                                    |
| AIRS   | Alberni Indian Residential School                            |
| BC     | British Columbia   |
| BCTP   | British Columbia Treaty Process                              |
| CBC    | Canadian Broadcasting Corporation                            |
| CWL    | Catholic Women's League                                      |
| EMI    | Ekklesia Ministries International                            |
| IPA    | International Phonetic Alphabet                              |
| KBS    | Korean Broadcasting System                                   |
| MP     | Member of Parliament   |
| NAC    | Native American Church                                       |
| NAIM   | North American Indian Mission                                |
| NAIITS | Native American Institute for Indigenous Theological Studies |
| NLS    | Nuu-chah-nulth Language System                               |
| NT     | The New Testament  |
| NTC    | Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council                                |
| NWT    | Northwest Territory  |
| OCMS   | Oxford Centre for Mission Studies                            |
| OT     | The Old Testament  |
| RCMP   | Royal Canadian Mounted Police                                |
| TRC    | Truth and Reconciliation Commission                          |
| WCAT   | West Coast Allied Tribes                                     |
| WCDSIC | West Coast District Society of Indian Chiefs                 |
| VST    | Vancouver School of Theology                                 |







## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background

The Americas are made up of many different Indigenous people groups. Among them is the Nuu-chah-nulth people of the Pacific Northwest. Their territory is the Western half of Vancouver Island, British Columbia, Canada, roughly 125 miles North and South of the mid-coast. The Nuu-chah-nulth people share the Wakashan language roots (see Table 1) and share a similar worldview and social structure with their Northern neighbours, namely, the Southern Kwakwaiutl and the Nuxalk (Kirk 1986). Nuu-chah-nulth people were formerly known as Nootkans.<sup>1</sup> There is no agreement on the length of time, or, how and when they first appeared in the region.

| <b>Nuu-chah-nulth: A Language of Canada</b> |  |
|---|--|
| Alternative Names                           | Aht, Nootka, Nootkans, Nutka, Nuučaanał, Quuquūaca, T'aat'aaqsapa, West Coast  |
| Population                                  | 130 (FPCC 2014). 200 semi-speakers (FPCC 2014). Ethnic population: 7,680 (FPCC 2014)   |
| Location                                    | British Columbia province: Vancouver Island, Pacific Ocean Coast.  |
| Language Status                             | 8b (Nearly extinct). Language of recognized Indigenous Peoples: Ahousaht, Ehattesaht, Hesquiaht, Hupacasath, Huu-ay-aht, Toquaht, Ucluelet, Ka:’yu:’k’t’h’/ Che:k:tl̓es7et’h’, Mowachaht/Muchalaht, Nutchatlaht, Pacheedaht, Tlo-o-qui-aht, Tseshah, Uchucklesaht, |
| Classification                              | Wakashan, Southern Wakashan  |
| Dialects                                    | Cheklesah, Kyuquot, Ehattesaht, Nutchatlaht, Mowachaht, Muchalaht, Hesquiaht, Ahousaht, Tlo-o-qui-aht, Ucluelet, Toquaht, Uchucklesaht, Tseshah, Hupacasath, Huu-ay-aht. Reportedly similar to Ditidaht [dtd] and Makah [myh].                                     |

---

<sup>1</sup> Captain James Cook, who thought it was the native name for what came to be called Nootka Sound, originated the term. *Nootkans*, hereafter Nootkans

|                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| Language Use         | The language is almost completely replaced by English in both formal and informal domains of use, though significant passive knowledge of the language survives. Ceremonial use. All also use English [eng]. |
| Language Development | Some dialects of the language are taught in local community schools. Dictionary. Grammar. Texts.   |
| Writing              | Unwritten  |
| Other Comments       | The Nuu-chah-nulth tribe is recognized by the Canadian government, and the Nuu-chah-nulth language is recognized as an individual language by the First People's Heritage, Language and Culture Council.     |

**Table 1: Ethnolinguistic table of Nuu-chah-nulth (Simons & Fennig 2018)**

The Nuu-chah-nulth is one of the few Indigenous peoples on the Pacific coast who hunted whales and shared the potlatch ceremony with other Pacific Northwest cultures, where the host honoured guests with generous gifts. They were gifted mask-makers (Kruger 2003: 79) and used their masks in dance rituals. The Nuu-chah-nulth culture went through constant changes in forms and meanings along with the changes in their political and social situations. However, they maintain the tradition of their ceremonies and honour their tribal social structures to this day.

The Nuu-chah-nulth people are still living in the reserves that they received in the 1880s. Nuu-chah-nulths became part of the federal Indian reserve system when British Columbia joined Canada in 1871.

## **1.2 Research Problem**

For the past centuries, the mission of North American Indigenous groups, and other Indigenous groups elsewhere resulted that the relationship with their Creators required them to reject their own identity and adopt a European one (Leblanc 2014: 512). The effect was to leave Indigenous people in deep-rooted self-doubt and even self-rejection. Even though it was not the intention, the mission caused social and cultural assimilation much more than spiritual transformation (Knockwood 1992: 134). This was not a problem

of ancient history; but, the twentieth-century mission utilized the same mission model. Traditional approaches to the mission with Indigenous peoples, thus, produced dismal outcomes as a result. The mandate of the twentieth-century mission was to continue the task that begun as far as the earliest Jesuit mission among the Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, and others at the dawn of the seventeenth century (Thwaites 1896) – namely, civilizing and Christianising (Ross 2010), discussed in Chapter Five.

The old model of Indigenous mission was implemented across the denominational lines, and arguably still is in the missions today (LeBlanc 2014: 513). Leblanc pointed back to Edinburgh 1910 that the theology of mission was shortcomings of a common pre-Reformation theological history and its construction of the nature and purpose of the mission. The task of rethinking the theological pre-supposition of mission and shift of methods was not the concern of the conference at Edinburgh 1910 (Philip 1910: 64).

In this mode of the mission, to Indigenous people who came across Christianity, the mission had no interest in the other aspects of their life but offered soul-salvation and eternal life. Even in the ardent missionary endeavour toward Indigenous people, they were largely side-lined in the growth of the contemporary societies and subjugated by those bringing the gospel. It was around the late 1980s that Indigenous believers started seeking to facilitate spiritual transformation and growth with an Indigenous frame of reference without leaving their relationship with Jesus. They started engaging the daunting task of stripping the cultural wrapping of ‘propositional, controlling, Westernized, religious expressions of the gospel’ and pursued transformation through the singular power of the gospel (LeBlanc 2014: 514). Nevertheless, this movement often faced oppositions in being seen as heterodox or idolatrous.

A concept of mission as holistic has become increasingly accepted among evangelicals, especially in the Two-Thirds World, since the International Congress on World Evangelization, held in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974. The concern of the holistic model was to correct one-sided understanding of mission, by facilitating the balance between



the vertical and the horizontal dimensions of mission. The vertical interpretation of the gospel concerns with God's saving action in the life of an individual, whereas the horizontal interpretation of it as mainly concerned with human relationships in the world (Goodall 1968: 317-318). In his speech at Uppsala Assembly of the World Council of Churches (1968), W.A. Visser 't Hooft addressed that a Christianity which only used the vertical preoccupation as only means escaped from its responsibility for and in the ordinary life of man and denied 'the incarnation of God's love for the world manifested in Christ.'

However, the model of holistic mission at that time saw the horizontal interpretation of the gospel only within the limits of social justice, social action, political liberation, and socio-political, but, unfortunately, still oblivious to contextual approach.

Indigenous mission started, from its beginning in the colonial era, without any concern for the wide cultural gap and the cultural mediation of the gospel for their culture. Nevertheless, it often perceived that the culture stood in the way of the gospel. In the Indigenous mission in Northwest Canada, there were indications, according to the Wesleyan Missionary Society Report, that 'Indian missions' were widely suspected of being a failure. The report signified that perceived failure always connected to the resurgence of Indigenous traditional practices.<sup>2</sup> It offers a theory as to the failure of the mission by then, but the sustaining issue, between culture and gospel, has been the most contended topic in the mission of Indigenous people.

Jack Forbes, the Indigenous American scholar, pointed out that the gap was created by the differences in the perception of religion. He noted that the obvious cause for this gap was because

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<sup>2</sup> 1874-78/78-84. Microfilm. Vancouver, Canada: The United Church Archives at Vancouver School of Theology.

Indigenous religion is not prayer; it is not a church; it is not theistic; it is not atheistic; it has little to do with what white people call religion. In addition to what is not a religion, religion is living, and what they do twenty-four hours a day (1979: 26-27).

The difference in the perception of religion led to a wide gap in the assessment of Christian progress by Christian denominations. The Indigenous theologian Vine Deloria Jr. learned in his encounter with the Presbyterian minister who was in charge of Indigenous missions, and his intended plan to continue their missionary work among an Indigenous tribe that lived as Christians for more than 350 years. Because he saw that the 'job is not done' (1988: 112). It is the contention of the study that Christianity in Indigenous culture can grow differently from conventional Christianity and take a unique cultural form. Cultural understanding and new expressions of the gospel have been advocated since the early 1970s by field missionaries and Christian anthropologists such as Paul Hiebert (1976) and Donald Richardson (1975). This cultural form of Christianity may differ from the terms and concepts used in traditional Christian theology. However, within the framework of the most basic Christian doctrines, new terms must be re-examined and recognized.

Therefore, it is the contextual or theological approach of the mission that requires in this study to recognize what kind of Christianity the cultural characters possessed by the Nuu-chah-nulth has formed and will make in the future. This type of study fits into a category of local theology or Contextual theology, which was conceptualized in Chapter Two.

Contextual theology deals with the integral aspects of Christian theology. Most Christians profess that the doctrine of Trinity stands at the centre of Christian faith. However, for Nuu-chah-nulths, the Trinity was a theological concept regarding God's inner nature that was foreign and culturally distant from their thought world. In order to have a meaningful dialogue of the basic understanding of Christianity with the Nuu-chah-nulth constructive thoughts, it needs to study through comparison of cultural sign systems at a symbolic/philosophical level.

Moreover, the contextual approach to Indigenous mission requires theological starting points different from the conventional theology. The general missional thinking was much influenced by the West's view on Indigenous culture and people: They considered Indigenous people 'savage' (Lescarbot 1610: 91) and 'heathen' (Le Jeune 1634: 229). But Indigenous people should have had an understanding of God if it is accepted that God was omnipresent and not absent from what deemed to be a godless and heathen land and people (Leblanc 2014). In other words, Indigenous people required no new paradigm of civilization to know about God.

The same process challenges the conventional scope of Biblical interpretations and re-interprets them from the perspectives of Indigenous culture. As an Indigenous theologian, Leblanc suggests a few comparisons of definition needed in this contextual process:

- The western definition of the spiritual is behaviour, going to church, reading the Bible, or praying, whereas spirituality for Indigenous people is a general disposition towards life which all of the creation shares a spiritual nature.
- Seemingly fictitious and lavishly embellished Indigenous stories carry objective and factual teachings for the life and the community. These collective communal narratives have embedded cultural meanings about which all understandings are viewed through the idea of their spatial community.
- A contextual approach is possible only on the acknowledgement that, as Indigenous creation myth is true, there is but one Creator of all.
- Lastly, as a practical concern, contextual and restorative approaches to the mission of Indigenous people are far more impacting and biblically appropriate than seeking to replace Indigenous culture with other cultural ways.

As the character of the Christian God needs to be understood through the idea of a tribal deity to a Nuu-chah-nulth person, as a beginning point, the Christian practices derived from their cultural specificity can bring about other aspects, such as ecclesiological form

and worship style. On what grounds can these cultural interpretations of a Christianity be considered valid was based on what spiritual values were sought in their communities and what communal practices these values caused for them to act and whether the actions showed Christian theological understanding.

Besides, one of the irremovable features of the Christian religion was the fact of the historical Christ. How it is possible to mediate Christ to the Nuu-chah-nulth culturally is the main research of the study. The common cultural heroes appeared in too many of intertribal myths shared in a wide range of cultural groups. However, the central theme of their hero myths was the tribal survival that evolved into an advanced concept of communal system in time. Thus, the critical aim of this research lies in the understanding of their community.

Another critical study is to explore how the Nuu-chah-nulth conception of the spirit informs about the Christian understanding of the Holy Spirit. The traditional communal ceremony of adaptation of the spirit revealed the nature and function of the spirit. It informed about the traditional ideas of spirits and the concept of the transformation they pursued in the spirit adaptation. Their idea of spirit evolved through time, like the idea of spirit in the OT (Ps. 78: 39; Is.32:2; 2Kings 2:11; Ps. 11:6). Comparing the two developments mended the gap: how did the spirit become the Holy Spirit.

Christianity understood through the culture of the Nuu-chah-nulths, showed a different practical outlook from traditional Christianity. Moreover, since their religious ideas were deeply rooted and operated in the community, the current form of Christianity could not be established outside of their community. Thus, Christianity took a form that was absorbed in the traditional community, and, consequently, it was not easy for traditional Christianity to perceive the cultural form of Christianity. Thus, the study engaged in studying the aspects of their culture that allowed the above topics.

### **1.3 Methodology and Scope**

The following explained the methodology and the scope of the study.

#### **1.3.1 Methodology**

The research asked questions about the nature of the Nuu-chah-nulth religious ideas through the study of the culture, and how these ideas shaped their understanding of Christianity. Any religious ideas surfaced from the study of the culture were analysed and compared with the comparable ideas of Christian doctrines. The final outcome was to imagine toward an Indigenous Christianity according to the Nuu-chah-nulth culture.

This study first looked at the fundamental aspects of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture and explored how their cultural ideas have shaped the Nuu-chah-nulth society and their practices. Then, the study explored the cultural ideas and values of the Nuu-chah-nulth people that have survived, the changes that occurred in the contact with Western civilisation, especially with the Christian religion, and their implications for understanding their religious formations.

In particular, the study looked into their origin stories as the central elements of the foundational understanding of their pre-historic world. It also looked at their ceremonial feasts, and dance rituals, which are featured as the central parts in most of the current Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonies and assemblies, in regard to find their social and religious ideas. From the basis of these religious ideas, the study attempted to clear the ways for a Nuu-chah-nulth theology, as an original work, given the embeddedness of Christian theology particularly through the Canadian culture in Western culture.

Furthermore, the study examined the wider aspect of the cultural topics, rather than simply looking at selective cultural themes and ideas that were seemingly parallel to Western religious ideas. As often done in the work of inculturation, the method of merely comparing theological terms in two different cultures can lead to a misinterpretation.

Access to the world through perception, experience, and reason was possible only through one's perspective and interpretation within a larger cultural frame. Since many cultural ideas of the West were hidden from indigenous ways of knowing, and *vice versa*, a simple comparison of parallel cultural ideas without wider cultural interpretation caused misapprehensions. The concept of 'religion' was from the West, and thus, was foreign to most Indigenous people before contact. The Cameroonian Roman Catholic theologian Jean-Marc Elà pointed out that the understanding of the essence of inculturation, it should be concerned with the fundamental doctrines of Christian faith related to the realities of 'all aspects of life' (Mugambi 2002:198). It was impossible to isolate the religious dimension from the political, social, and economic aspects of the Indigenous reality (Peelman 2006:16-17). Therefore, the discussions in the study not only looked at the central cultural/religious themes but also tried to include the other cultural aspects related to the them.

Nevertheless, despite the awareness, cultural perspectivalism remained a limitation in this study because most of the academic and theological language was from the Western academia, especially the languages of religion were derived from Western religious ideas, and, perhaps, did not fully capture the cultural ideas about Indigenous religion. Moreover, before the arrival of Christianity, Indigenous peoples did not see their spirituality as a religion. Gene Green, an Evangelical scholar and NT professor at Wheaton College, who studied Indigenous theology, observed that the tension between the perspectives of the Indigenous and a broader cultural context. He noted that 'the authentic (Indigenous) voice was lost' when the readership shifted from the Indigenous readers to Western readers because for religious studies a Western religious perspective set 'the agenda for the way the Indigenous story is told' (Green 2015:5).

Furthermore, Indigenous methodologies were considered for the study. Indigenous research on non-Indigenous research paradigm must move beyond merely assuming an Indigenous perspective. An Indigenous paradigm came from the fundamental belief that

knowledge was relational, was shared with all creation, and therefore could not be owned or discovered. Indigenous research method should reflect these beliefs and the obligations they imply (Wilson 2001).

### **1.3.2 Scope of Study**

The study chose the following four main areas to be gateways to understand the Nuu-chah-nulth culture: 1) origin myths, 2) potlatches (feasts), 3) wolf dance ritual, and 4) the experience of Indian residential schools. The reasons for and purposes of choosing these four aspects of their culture were explained in the following.

#### ***1.3.2.1 Origin Myths***

The study looked at Nuu-chah-nulth origin myths to learn about their foundational ideas about the world, the understanding of the universe, and society. Paul Hiebert noted that creation stories offer diachronic themes of worldviews that help us understand the cosmology, human history, and biographies by showing fundamental plot or storyline in which they live (2008: 99). Myths often provided cultural ideas about creation, ideas of deities, and relationships which rendered insights into the religious notions of the people. The anthropologists Brian Thom, who studied the oral tradition of Northwest coast, suggested that oral narratives not only provided pre-historic data of the people but also presented their culture's communicative systems and norms (2003: 2-3). He asserted that the ways in which their stories were told could also tell us about the people.

Hence, to maintain currency with modern Nuu-chah-nulth people, the study chose the latest version of an origin myth of the Nuu-chah-nulth told by Richard Atleo, an elder and a hereditary chief of Ahousaht, as the principal story of the chapter. The elements in which this origin myth was written and the style of development of the stories showed their central culture and changes.

#### ***1.3.2.2 Potlatches***

The study also looked at Nuu-chah-nulth potlatches to understand their cultural ideas about social and kinship structures, and practices. Specific cultural items featured in these ceremonies helped us understand their societal values commonly held amongst the people which could render their ideas comparable to Christianity such as sin, repentance, redemption, judicial view, and ritual aspects of their assemblies. From the fact that the Nuu-chah-nulth people still retained these cultural ceremonies provided evidence of the survived meaning and the changes that occurred in their cultural process.

#### ***1.3.2.3 Wolf Dance***

*Tloo-qwah-nah*, the wolf dance ritual, was the most elaborate ritual in the Nuu-chah-nulth society and was still being featured as the central ritual in most of the Nuu-chah-nulth ceremonies today. Ceremonies featuring masked participants tended to be major rites. The wolf dances were communal dramas in which supernatural beings appeared in the villages, kidnapped children, took them to the ancestral homes of their lineages where they were instructed in some hereditary privilege, and finally returned to their families. These rites were often used as vehicles for transferring hereditary rights, such as the succession of chieftaincy, naming ceremony, and the rite of passage. Men wearing masks portrayed various supernatural beings. The ritual structures and the cultural ways they approach the ritual reveals their cultural ideas and the ways they interacted with the spiritual world. The study looked at the ritual to understand the underpinning conceptions of the spiritual realities in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture.

#### ***1.3.2.4 Indian Residential Schools***

Furthermore, the study examined the process of change with Nuu-chah-nulth religious life brought about by the arrival of Christianity and the colonial government, and mainly through the compulsory attendance in Indian Residential Schools, and looked at the



effects on the religious, social and communal life of Nuu-chah-nulth people. The discussion of religion or Christianity for Indigenous people could not be isolated from their historical journey and their present struggle arising from their experience. The study looked into some of the cultural and institutional consequences that came along with Christianity as the source of their attitudes toward Christianity.

### **1.3.3 Data Collection and Ethical Processes**

The Nuu-chah-nulth tribe was a collection of 14 officially recognized tribal villages and shared the same language and ceremonies, but in its scale and specific rituals had some differences. Each subdivision had historical and regional characteristics, and because of these differences, each produced variant historical materials. The literature and ethnographic data on the tribe was also created in the characteristics of each village and its historical process. But recently, these communities became more politically and culturally connected, together, to the latest culture they shared collectively and to the idea of their common traditions.

#### ***1.3.3.1 Ahousaht***

I had a favourable relationship with the Ahousaht community in Flores Island, British Columbia. Louie and Sal Frank, from a chiefly family of Ahousaht, invited me to work with the Ahousaht community as a missionary in 1995. Prior to this invitation, the couple and my family spent three months together at a Christian program in Winfield, BC.<sup>3</sup> Upon accepting the invitation, I started working with the Ahousaht Holistic Centre, a tribal healing centre that used the Christian and traditional healing methods to help their people. Together, we organized an annual youth camps for ten years for Indigenous young people (1996-2007), during which I interacted closely with the people, especially with elders,

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<sup>3</sup> Crossroad Discipleship Training School, Youth with A Mission, Canada.

and participated their traditional ceremonies and rituals to learn about the culture. I also participated in their potlatches and other ceremonies and rituals in this period. The information remains most vivid in my memory and is also recorded in my notes and essays.

#### ***1.3.3.2 Kyuquot***

Having worked in more villages of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribe, I established a friendly relationship with the village of Kyuquot, which was located farther north along the west coast, and began discovering the similarities and differences between the villages. Kyuquot being a small and intimate community, I was often invited to their ceremonies, and there, noticed the different scales and forms of their cultural practices, which gave balances to assessing primary cultural data.

In the initial stage of this research, I was given a typed copy of Philip Drucker's ethnographic work by Christine Jules, a Kyuquot elder which was given to her by Drucker himself and kept in her house for a long time. Hilda Hanson, a matriarch and elder in the village, and her daughter Teresa Hanson, then elected chief of the Kyuquot band, helped with my research and cooperated with data collection. Teresa and others in the village also participated in a documentary film project about my work with the Indigenous communities in Canada and life on the coastal Northwest Canada, which was broadcasted nationwide in Korea as a one-hour segment in the series the 'Han Report' in the Korea Broadcasting System (KBS) (2005).

#### ***1.3.3.3 Tsshaht***

Tsshaht has relatively easier access from the mainland and comfortable geographical conditions, and it became the subject of ample research by early anthropologists and linguists. As a result, Tsshaht was the subject of more research than any other Nuu-chah-nulth village, resulting in ample literature output on research. Tsshaht also received a

benefit of Western education. These conditions produced more Indigenous scholars and writers among them, and their works and literatures contributed much to recorded cultural preservation for the tribe.

All of the Sapir and Swadesh's works of translation, of the collected oral stories and ethnographical data which were originally collected from Nuuchahnulth speakers, mostly from Tseshaht, provided relevant cultural data (Sapir 2000, 1985, 1919, 1911; Sapir et al. 1990), and Sapir and Swadesh (Sapir & Swadesh 1939, 1955), and the materials from Nuuchahnulth authors are from Clutesi (Clutesi 1967, 1969). Ernst (Ernst 1952) provides the only recorded ethnography of a wolf dance ritual.

Charlotte Côté, an associate professor at the American Indian Studies at the University of Washington, is a scholar from Tseshaht and known for her traditional cultural studies on whale hunting of the Nuuchahnulth. I had a talk with her about the possibility of Indigenous contextual theology at the time I was planning this project (2009).

#### ***1.3.3.4 Mowachaht***

To explore how the Nuuchahnulth cultural ideas shaped their society and practice, I considered certain published materials as the primary sources. This consideration was necessary, given the oral nature of Nuuchahnulth culture and this type of academic research required references to recorded documents. They were written over different periods and from different perspectives. The published materials such as *The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt* (Jewitt 1824) provided the historical record (Jewitt & Stewart 1987) with his memoirs from the 28 months (1803-1805) he spent as a captive of Maquinna of the Nuuchahnulth ('Nootka') people and his personal journals let me to investigate Mowachaht society in a distant past.

Mowachaht was a village located in the Strait of Nootka and now uninhabited by Indigenous people but had a splendid history. The Indigenous people of the region met with early European explorers, such as the Spanish explorer José Mariano Moziño (1792),

the Spanish Fortification (Fort San Miguel, 1769-1795), and Captain James Cook (1778), and essential historical and cultural materials were produced based in the history of the region. I lived the last two decades in this village of Mowachaht (also called Tahsis). Geography and place names used in the past were preserved intact.

#### ***1.3.3.5 Ehatisaht***

Ehatis was a Nuu-chah-nulth village mainly inhabited by relatives of the Kyuquot, Ahousaht, and Mowachaht villages. The village was located interior of Vancouver Island, where people could go without having to board a boat, so contact with the nearby cities was frequent and for that reason, the life of the residents was not traditional, but it was, however, a reserve that kept the importance of traditional value, ceremony, and culture.

Ehatis village (band) office permitted me to interview its tribal members about residential schools and other topics about Christianity and allowed me to use their government building to do the interviews.

#### ***1.3.3.6 Interviews, Keywords, and Coding***

In addition to specific local data collected from each region, interviews conducted in the same regions were used primarily to study the impact of Indian residential school survivors on Christian beliefs and their views on Christianity. The interview data gave the understandings about how colonial contact and the arrival of Christianity changed their spirituality and religious worldview as well as the social and communal structures and operation of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The data from the interviews showed the process in which of their traditional values survived and were influencing their current understanding of life.

These interview data, from the residential school attendees, were classified through keywords, and the coded data were divided into two-volume booklets. Other than the

targeted interviews, other interviews were conducted in the general regions as needed for detail cultural ideas.

The interviewees attended residential schools were from 1923 to 1977. The total number of interviews was fifty-five. Among them, twenty went to Old Christie, and 18, Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS), 3, (New) Christie, 2, Ahousaht Day School, and 12, mixed. There were 23 women and 32 men.

The interview questions were:

- (1) Which residential school did you attend? What years?
- (2) What are the things you remember about residential school when you first went there?
- (3) What were you taught there?
- (4) What your memories about the teachers or staff at the residential school?
- (5) What was your daily schedule at residential school?
- (6) What were the extra-curricular activities at school?
- (7) Tell me about your physical treatment while at school.
- (8) Tell me about your emotional treatment while at school.
- (9) Tell me how your life has been since you were in school and how your school experience relates to your life.

The keywords used in coding interviews were extracted from the interviews themselves. Reading the interview database, there are several important topics that have been found. The study explored these topics from the interview data, primarily looking for how these experiences informed the view of the Nuuchah-nulth towards Christianity and the impact on the formation of their Christian faith. The interview coding as well as the thematic method used in Chapter Three followed Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 77-101), of their detail steps were explained in the thematic method (1.4 Method).

The words such as ‘trauma,’ ‘leaving home,’ ‘separation,’ ‘abandonment,’ ‘loneliness,’ ‘uncertainty,’ and ‘anxiety’ were found in their experiences of residential schools in their initial stage. These words coded to analyze the initial impact of the students at Indian residential schools. The codes were used to answer the interview question (2).

The words such as ‘emotional,’ ‘physical,’ ‘abuse,’ ‘destruction,’ ‘homesick,’ ‘inhumane,’ ‘denial,’ ‘malnutrition,’ were used when the interviewees expressed their struggles at the schools. These words were used to analyze how the students felt about the treatment and ongoing struggles at the schools. The codes were mainly used to answer the interview question (4), (7), and (8).

‘Brainwashing,’ ‘reason for going to school,’ ‘fear,’ ‘boundaries,’ ‘Christianity,’ ‘priest(s),’ ‘force,’ ‘religion,’ ‘punishment for talking,’ ‘language,’ ‘frustration,’ ‘feeling better,’ ‘language patrolled,’ ‘policing,’ ‘less human,’ were often expressed when they perceived how their traditional cultural values were demoted and used to explain how the students formed the attitudes toward Western culture and Christianity. The codes were related to the interview questions (3), (4), (5), and (6).

The interviewees expressed the views and the ranges of the abuses at the residential school in ‘humiliation,’ ‘strapping,’ ‘disobedient,’ ‘running away,’ ‘sheer cruelty,’ ‘beatings,’ ‘violence,’ ‘retaliation,’ ‘riot,’ ‘physical,’ ‘sexual,’ ‘emotional,’ and so. These codes surfaced more and were used to answer the interview question (7). The abuses were a dominant theme in the study of residential schools.

The expressions such as ‘powerlessness,’ ‘shame,’ ‘lasting hurts,’ ‘spiritual abuse,’ ‘sexual manipulation,’ ‘loss of cultural and language,’ ‘self-hatred,’ ‘stealing habit,’ ‘short of life skills’ show the painful consequences and memories they have left to them from their boarding school experience. These codes were used in answering the interview question (9).

To learn the impacts of the residential schools on the understanding of Christianity and the Christian faith of the attendees, the words ‘prayer,’ ‘religious education,’ ‘religion,’

‘bible study,’ ‘confession booth,’ ‘God,’ ‘forgiveness,’ ‘religious stuff,’ ‘preachers,’ ‘missionaries,’ ‘Lord’s Prayer,’ ‘Hail Mary and the prayers,’ and, ‘Catechism.’ These keywords and codes surfaced naturally from the interviews and were used to answer the main question of how the experiences from residential school impact the understanding of Christianity for the Nuuchahnulth students.

## **1.4 Methods**

Depending on the nature of the data used in each chapter, different approaches and methods were used to ensure the desired outcome of this study. The study used narrative and thematic analysis, symbolic anthropological approach. The methods of each chapter are described as followed.

### **1.4.1 Narrative and Thematic Analyses**

The narrative method integrates epistemological and ontological assumptions, whereas the thematic method breaks down data into themes that can be used within different research perspectives. There were different narrative approaches, but all assumed that in some way story-telling constructed meaning.

Thus, a narrative approach had advantages to view what was being researched as was storied in some way. The use of a narrative approach helped to keep story components rather than as fragmented and meant that the narrative analysis was more sensitive to the temporal aspects of the experience.

On the other hand, thematic analysis was instrumental in identifying common themes among participants through the concept of a shared theme, although views on each subject was more granular. The study followed Six Phases of Thematic Analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006: 77-101) which gave concrete steps to: 1) Preliminary initial codes and detail notes, 2) Comprehensive codes of how data answers research question, 3) List of candidate themes for further analysis, 4) Coherent recognition of how themes are

patterned to tell an accurate story about the data, 5) comprehensive analysis of what the themes contribute to understand the data, and 6) the results. In Chapter Three, for the study of origin story, most themes were familiar theological and thus had no need the whole process, whereas for the interview data for residential school in Chapter Five engaged all steps in the thought process of the data.

The purpose of studying the origin myth was to discover religious ideas and worldview throughout the story, as well as specific themes that the story reveals.

The narrative analytical process began with the data collection itself. Among the many origin myths in this tribe, the myth delivered by the most culturally authentic storyteller was chosen, and similar legends of the surrounding tribes were selected for comparative analysis.

A special attention of narrative analysis for Indigenous myths was necessary since Northwest coast oral tradition and anthropology studied from the oral narrative of Indigenous tribes of Northwest and the structure of their narratives often reflects their social situations. Thom suggests that all social acts are imbued with relations of power and the accompanying potential for dominance, hegemony, and resistance. So even the seemingly innocuous categorization of Indigenous oral traditions as myth or legend, house story, or tale can take on a highly potent social life in arenas where myth is transformed into common law, and house stories become legal code (Thom 2003:3).

Finally, since the two approaches are not completely incompatible, this study can make a thematic analysis to address the topical aspects of the entire data set and select particularly interesting parts to investigate in more depth through narrative analysis. So, a balance of both the narrative and thematic analysis was used in Chapter Three.

### **1.4.2 Method for Symbolic Anthropology**

This study uses symbolic anthropology to interpret the symbolic nature of the feasts and rituals. Symbolic anthropology or, more broadly, symbolic and interpretive anthropology,



is the study of cultural symbols and how those symbols can be used to gain a better understanding of a society (Geertz 1973: 5). Kan wrote *Symbolic Immortality* which studied the comprehensive analysis of the mortuary practices of the Tlingit Indians of southeastern Alaska. He used ‘symbolic analysis’ to explore cosmology, eschatology, and ethnopsychology, as well as the meanings of rituals (Kan 1989:8). The strength of this approach is the focus on ritual’s ability to inter-articulate, through its symbols, ‘ultimate existential concerns, immediate personal and affective concerns, and ongoing structural problems and conflicts’ (Ortner 1978: 98). As the study aims to discover fundamental religious concerns, through religious/cultural symbols, in the Nuu-chah-nulth social customs and ceremonies, and the eventual aims are to imagine the Indigenous Christian self-understanding. Symbolism defines when something represents abstract ideas or concepts and thus communicate at fundamental philosophical grounds.

#### **1.4.3 Narrative, Themes, and Symbols**

The methods used in this study follow the cultural sources chosen for the study. The origin myth was an oral story that reflected ideas about the world. The traditional ideas about their worldview were to reveal the story setting, tone, characters and their engagements with one another, and other aspects. These ideas showed the religious particularities, which could compare to Christianity through thematic analysis. In comparing the ideas from the two sides, Indigenous and Christian, symbolic anthropological method was used. This study, however, could find no specific reference to the mixture of these methods, although Bevan’s anthropological model of contextual theology suggested the methodological process (Bevans 2012).

#### 1.4.4 Position of the Author

Can a non-Indigenous person do an Indigenous theology? This question is important because it asks a more fundamental question, can outsiders learn the core of a culture?

Emerson said

If a man claims to know and speak of God and carries you backwards to the phraseology of some old mouldered nation in another country, in another world, believe him not (1971:1103).

It is generally true that a person who does not fully share one's experience is not to be fully trusted to speak of God in that person's context.

Bevans, however, suggests possible conditions under which an outsider can participate in another context 'to some degree' (2012: 18-21). Despite the obvious and realistic problems of paternalism and colonialism that have often highlighted the existence of outsiders in culture, Schreiter also suggests, the role of outsiders in the development of contextual theologies has often been quite significant (1985: 19). The two seemed to agree for the following reasons. First, an outsider may be more in tune with a particular culture than many who were born within it. Second, cultural strangers may be more in tune with the culture than older indigenous persons who were formed in their Christianity and theology in an era when religion and cultural expression was taken little consideration. The idea of indigenous theology in Indigenous Christianity is something that has recently begun to emerge, and there may be a lack of Indigenous Christian institutions or professional personalities in the Northwest that can lead to these theological changes. Bevans asserted that, for these reasons, a person outside of the culture could contribute culturally and socially sensitive insights into the development of Indigenous theology.

As a person who lived in various cultures and had cross-cultural exposures, it was an ongoing part of my life to study cultures and different symbolism. I was born into a Methodist family in South Korea whose first Christian was the matriline great-grandmother who first believed in a missionary Methodist church. I finished the years of my teens in Southern California, where I began helping refugees, and engaging overseas

missions. At my mid-thirties, I started a missionary life in Indigenous peoples' territory and continued in the subsequent decades. There, I observed that the culturally expressed Christian faith by Nuuchahnulth was different from Western Christianity, which prompted me to ask, what does their salvation look like? Thus, this study is not about constructing a complete theology of the Nuuchahnulth, but to attempt at a possible direction for which their Christianity someday will be perceived. I hope to spur their interests in Christian theological thinking. Moreover, this undertaking facilitates the appropriation of Christian faith in ways that embody the Nuuchahnulth culture. Consequently, the results will also suggest changes the ways of approaching the mission to Indigenous people.

### **1.5 Research Questions**

The main research question for the study is:

- 'How can the religious ideas embedded in the Nuuchahnulth culture give an understanding of Christian meaning to Nuuchahnulth people?'

This question deals with the nature of contextual theology for the Nuuchahnulth.

The first sub-question:

- 'What are the continuing philosophical ideas stored in the Nuuchahnulth myth of origin?'

This question deals with their worldview and the religious themes and ideas their creation myth had.

The second sub-question:

The second part deals with their cultural aspect. The questions to follow in this area:

- 'How do older Nuuchahnulth ideas influence their social practices?'

The study of the critical features of ceremonies and ritual today reveals how their continuity and discontinuity with the past.

The third sub-question:

- ‘How do historical contact and experiences from colonial residential school influence their view of Christianity?’

The study of the impact of the experience of colonial residential school on the Nuuchah-nulth shows their stance with Christianity.

### **1.6 Primary and Secondary Sources**

The research based on primary sources: fieldwork, mainly participating and observing at potlatches, funerals, and other ceremonies (2010-2012); interviews for residential schools (2011 -2012); other supplementary interviews (2013); and the literature in secondary sources. The research data were from personal memories, interviews, visits to an archive at Vancouver School of Theology (VST) at University of British Columbia (2010), and museums and attending cultural gatherings and ceremonies (2010-2012), such as the naming ceremony, the rite of passage,<sup>4</sup> funerals,<sup>5</sup> memorials (2012), the long house dance ceremonies, the adoption ceremony and the transfer of chieftain’s seat (2009).<sup>6</sup> Personal memories were recounted from my associations and encounters with Nuuchah-nulth tribes (1996-2014). During this period, the village (bands/subdivisions) I frequently visited were Ahousaht, Kyuquot, Tseshah, Hesquiaht, and Mowachaht. I acquired stories and cultural ideas from elders, witnessed cultural ceremonies and through community

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<sup>4</sup> In 2011, Captain Mears Primary Secondary School in Tahsis (traditionally Mowachaht) held a potlatch for their Indigenous students for the naming ceremony and the rite of passage.

<sup>5</sup> I have participated in the funerals, of the Swan family in Ahousaht, and of the John family in Campbell River during the research periods (2010-2012).

<sup>6</sup> The transfer of Chieftain seat of a grand chief seldom happened. The most recent and closest one to the research happened in 2009.

events. Some notes and memos were created from observations and reflections from those interactions, and they were selected as primary source. These items and data are listed in the section of primary sources in the bibliography.

To fill the temporal gaps between distant past and my encounter of the people, I considered certain published materials as the primary sources. This consideration was more necessary, given the oral nature of Nuu-chah-nulth culture and this type of academic research requires references to evidential documents. They were written over different periods of time and from different perspectives. As aforementioned, published materials such as *The adventures and sufferings of John R. Jewitt* (Jewitt 1824), most of Sapir's works of translation, of the collected oral stories and ethnographical data (Sapir 2000, 1985, 1919, 1911; Sapir, et al. 1990), and Sapir and Swadesh (Sapir & Swadesh 1939, 1955), and the materials from Nuu-chah-nulth authors are from Clutesi (Clutesi 1967, 1969). Ernst (Ernst 1952) provides the only recorded ethnography of a wolf dance ritual. The secondary academic and historic sources are drawn from numerous publications. The following provide historical, ethnographical accounts of the Nuu-chah-nulth society and tradition: Boas (Boas 1989, 1897, 1974), Drucker (Drucker 1951, Drucker 1963, Drucker 1950; Drucker & Heizer 1967), Mozzino (Mozzino 1926), Sproat (Sproat 1987, Sproat 1868), Arima (Arima 1983). Philip Drucker's original ethnographic work, uninfluenced by Boas and Sapir, gave a detailed account of every aspect of the Northern and Central Nootkan tribes. The material for his report was collected in 1935-36. Both Jewitt and Drucker's materials showed a great deal of data about societal structure and cultural practices.

The Nuu-chah-nulth origin stories are compiled in a number of books. Atleo uses the stories from George Clutesi's *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* (Clutesi 1967) to base his Nuu-

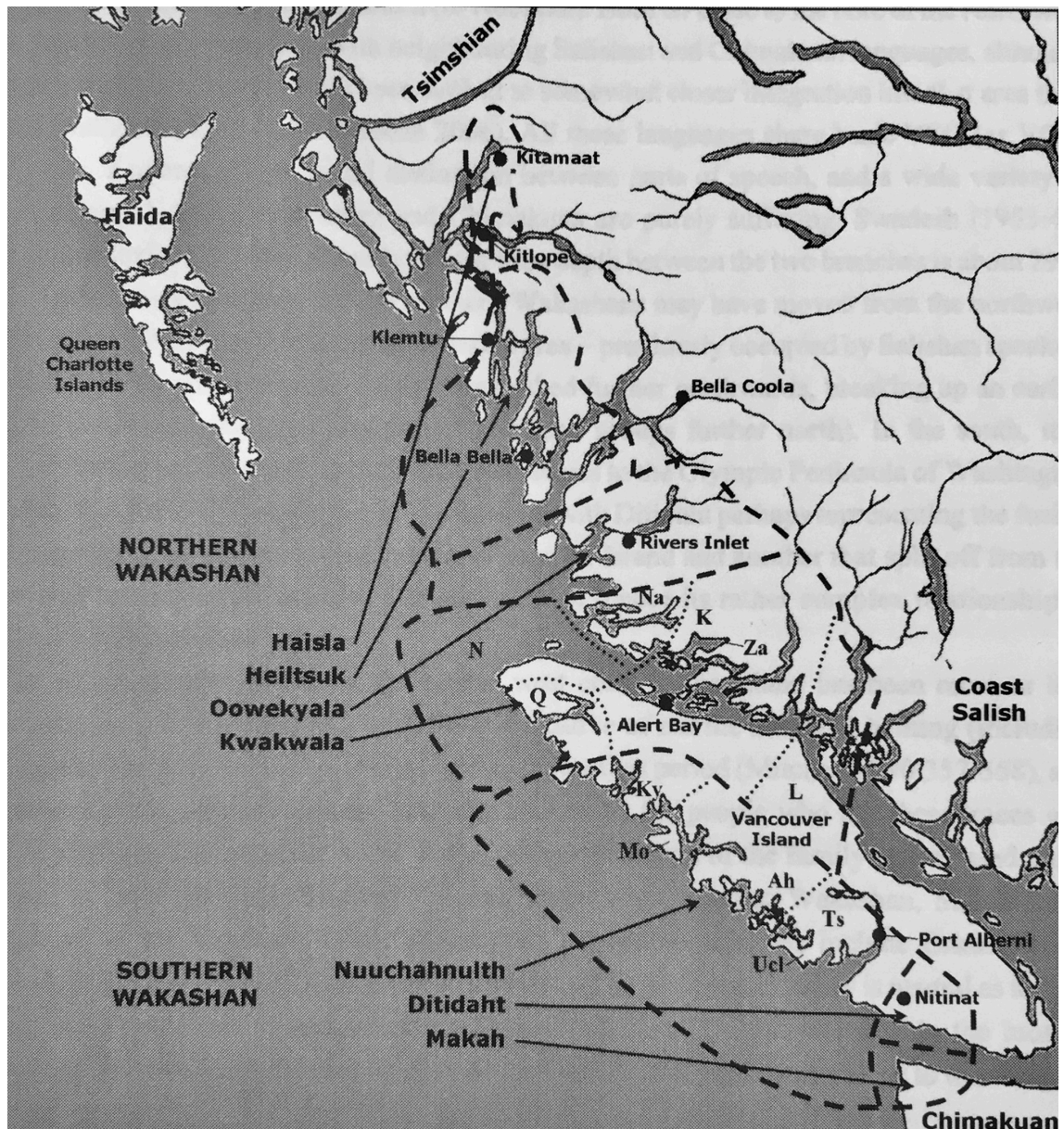


Figure 1: The Wakashan Languages (Fortescue 2007)

Abbreviations on the map:

Ts – Tseshaht, Ah – Ahousaht, Q – Quatsino, N – Newti, Za – Zawadinuxw,  
 L – Ligwiltidaxw (Lekwiltok), Na – NakwaxdaXw, K – Kwagull (Kwakiutl),  
 Ucl – Ucluelet, Mo – Mowachaht

chah-nulth social theory. The study referred to Bobby Lake-Thom's *Spirits of the Earth*, a contemporary commentary on their stories. Drucker, in his ethnographic works, has also documented spiritual tales and stories that are significant in understanding their worldview.

### **1.6.1 Interview Data**

Finally, the interviews were conducted in all three major regions of Nuuchah-nulth territory: Clayoquot Sound of Southern Nuuchah-nulth, Nootka Sound of mid-Nuuchah-nulth, and Kyuquot Sound of Northern Nuuchah-nulth. It is necessary to engage all three regions for interviews because each region developed unique and slightly different traditions.

The data collected from interviews helped the understanding of how colonial contact and the arrival of Christianity has changed their spirituality and religious worldview as well as the social and communal structures and operation of the Nuuchah-nulth people. The data from the interviews help determine which of their traditional values have survived and are influencing their current understanding of life.

For the integrity and the consistency with the ideal of the research, I used decolonizing methodologies since research measured by previous standards or theories may be limiting it to a neo-colonial practice (Bishop 2005). I also used the data from earlier books and try to interpret them from an indigenous and modern perspective as needed.

### **1.7 Nomenclature for North American Indian Peoples**

North American Indian Peoples are referred to call by a number of different names that have some historical and political background. There is an ongoing discussion about the changing terminology used by indigenous peoples of the Americas to describe themselves, as well as how they prefer to be referred to by others. Preferred terms vary primarily by region and age. As indigenous people and communities are diverse, there is no consensus on naming, aside from the fact that most people prefer to be referred to by their specific nation, such as Cherokee, Navaho, Lakota, and so.

Besides being a misnomer, the term ‘Indians’ collectively describes all the Indigenous people in Canada who are not Inuit or Métis. Indian peoples are one of the three peoples recognized as Aboriginal in the Constitution Act of 1982, along with Inuit and Métis. The

word '*Métis*' is French for 'mixed blood.' The Constitution Act of 1982 recognizes Métis as one of the three Aboriginal Peoples of Canada. Inuit are the Aboriginal People of Arctic Canada. Inuit live primarily in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and the northern parts of Quebec and throughout most of Labrador. They have traditionally lived north of the tree line in the area bordered by the Mackenzie Delta in the west, the Labrador coast in the east, the southern point of Hudson Bay in the south, and the High Arctic islands in the north. The word Inuit means "the people" in Inuktitut and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves.

The term 'Native' is a word similar in meaning to Aboriginal. Native Peoples is used as a collective term to describe the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term, however, is increasingly seen as outdated (particularly when used as a noun) and is starting to lose acceptance. 'Native American' is commonly-used term in the United States describes the descendants of the original peoples of North America. The term has not caught on in Canada because of the apparent reference to U.S. citizenship.

The term 'First Nations' came into common usage in the 1970s to replace band or Indian, which some people found offensive. Despite its widespread use, there is no legal definition for this term in Canada.

In the study of religion or other academic writings 'Amerindian' and 'Indigenous' are the two most used terms today. Amerindian is another term for American Indian, used chiefly in academic, anthropological and linguistic contexts.

Indigenous means 'native to the area.' In this sense, Aboriginal Peoples are indigenous to North America. Its meaning is similar to Aboriginal Peoples, Peoples, or First Peoples. The term is used, when it usually refers to Aboriginal people internationally. However, the term is gaining acceptance, particularly among some Aboriginal scholars to recognize the place of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada's late- colonial era and implies land tenure. The term is also used by the United Nations in its working groups and in its Decade of the World's Indigenous People. This study uses Amerindian only when referring only to



the Indigenous people of North America and needing to distinguish them from other Indigenous groups elsewhere in the world, e.g. Indigenous people from Africa or South Americas. Other than that, the term ‘Indigenous’ was used for referring to Canadian Aboriginal people.

## **1.8 Terminology**

I recognized any English-based system inevitably does violence to the pronunciation of Nuuchahnulth vocabulary. Accents can differ considerably even among the 14 Nuuchahnulth communities, which can cause confusion about spelling. Indigenous languages have many sounds that are lacking in English, and therefore, require special spelling. However, since this special spelling is difficult for the rest of us to follow, I used a conventional spelling for most parts and use Nuuchahnulth (*T'aat'aaqsapa*) spelling where it is needed, especially when discussing the morphology of words. Other spelling was used in accordance with some of Indigenous authors, even though it fails to accurately convey accurately the pronunciation of Indigenous words. I have provided an orthography, a table for Nuuchahnulth pronunciation guide, and a glossary of frequently used words in Appendices.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

#### **DEVELOPING AN INDIGENOUS THEOLOGY**

##### **2.1 Introduction**

The construction of theology that can accommodate a specific tribe or social group requires the contextualization of theology, which is also called Local theology or Christian inculturation. Postcolonial theologians expressed their suspicion of the colonial church and Eurocentric theological scholarship to create an encounter between the Biblical text and the cultural context. The culture and worldview of tribal context that was once condemned as pagan have now been revisited as the subject of biblical interpretation.

##### **2.2 Contextual Theology**

The theology of Western churches is no longer seen to speak for all regions of the world. In its Western form, it is no longer universal and accessible for persons from other cultures (Schreiter: 1985). This change of view was first brought about and signified by the emergence of various theologies reflecting the interests of the Two-Third World as the liberation theology of Latin America. It was realized by Western theologians that their theology had just as much socio-cultural bias as any other. It too was a local theology in its social and cultural context, expressing the gospel from its own context. The Roman Catholic theologian Schillebeeckx, in his introduction to Schreiter's book, *Constructing Local Theologies*, emphatically said, 'How can this self-same Gospel, which is given only

in a societal and cultural context and can never be wholly extricated from any culture, be allowed to speak the language of an entirely different culture? (Schreier 1985: ix).

The contextualization of theology, said Bevans, the attempt to understand Christian faith in terms of a particular context, is really a ‘theological imperative’ (2012: 3). What we called the history of Christian thought consisted of a series of local theologies, and therefore, Fasholé-Luke agreed ‘theology should deal with cultural concepts along with theological ideas, to adequately represent the culture. Conversion to Christianity must be coupled with cultural continuity’ (1975). The theology that we have come to understand today is the outcome of a very process of contextualization. A contextual approach to theology is not only in many ways a ‘radical departure from the noting of traditional theology’ but, also at the same time, it is very much in continuity with it (Bevans 2012: 3).

### **2.2.1 Present Human Experience**

A new theological source for contextual theology is ‘present human experience’ (context). This change makes contextual theology radically different from classical theology. Classical theology was understood as a reflection on the two theological sources of scripture and tradition that have not changed and conceived as a kind of objective science of faith. However, contextual theology recognizes the validity of ‘present human experience’ (Bevans 2012: 4).

Moreover, theology is not just a matter of relating to an external message. It needs to be treated as relating to the deep-roots of the cultural and historical situation since the understanding of reality comes as the perceived reality of the human context. As Charles Kraft puts it:

There is always a difference between reality and human culturally conditioned understandings of that reality. We assume that there is a reality ‘out there’, but it is the mental constructs of that reality inside our heads that are most real to us. God, the author of reality, exists outside any culture. Human beings, on the other hand, are always bound by cultural, subcultural, and psychological conditioning to perceive and interpret what they see of reality in ways appropriate to these conditionings. Neither the absolute God

nor the reality created is perceived absolutely by culture-bound human beings (Kraft 1979: 300).

Indigenous people saw their reality through their cultural lens and expressed it through their language. Since their reality was also closely related to nature, their cultural views were often expressed through nature around them. Therefore, their indigenous theology can only be created and expressed through these understanding of their own reality.

### **2.2.2 Scripture and Tradition in Context**

Scripture and tradition were also developed in cultural and historical contexts. As we recognize the importance of context for new theology, we also need to acknowledge the obvious importance of context for the development of both scripture and tradition. They are products of peoples and their cultures. The different names of God in the Old Testament point to different cultural meanings, interests, human circumstances in context. The Hebrew God, El, Eloah, Elohim, or El Elyon convey the idea of a transcendent being, superhumanly strong, and with inexhaustible life. Adonay means one who rules over everything. Yahweh is God's personal name, which was given to Moses in his encounter with God in the Hebrew scriptures (New Dictionary of Theology 1988: 274).

The various cultures of humankind have their unique understanding of God. The scripture also confirms that God gave the desire of eternity to the hearts of humankind, in Ecclesiastes (3:11), as it says, '[God] has also set eternity in the human heart'. This fact enables the dialogue of God in each culture because it confirms that the creator of this world is one and the creator is understood to be unique in every culture.

The fact that the stories of the synoptic gospel are written in different cultural perspectives also reveals a specific cultural and traditional context. The process by which the law was formed in the tribal community before the law of the Old Testament was codified may have been similar to that of the formation of the laws of other tribal societies. The past scripture and tradition are preserved in a context. In doing a contextual theology, a major part of the theological task is to discover about past Christian theology and to

take into account the present experience, the context. It is authentic theology ‘when what has been received is appropriated, made our own. For that to happen, the received tradition must, of course, pass through the sieve of our individual and contemporary-collective experience: we cannot give it, profess it as ours, unless such a process occurs’ (Hall 1993: 33).

Moreover, cultures naturally preserve divine standards for the survival of society and human continuity. In a parenthetical note in the book of Romans (2:14-15), St. Paul implies his understanding that the same ideals of the law in the Old Testament Hebrew culture were also ‘written in the hearts’ of those in other cultures. Conn affirms that ‘cultures are also the means of God’s common grace. Through his providential control, God uses the shaping of human cultures to check the rampant violence of evil and preserve human continuity’ (Conn 2000: 254). This fact also provides an essential methodological element of indigenous theology. This perspective provides us with an important basis for discussing contextual Christian theology in different cultures.

### **2.2.3 ‘Prophets’ and ‘Poets’ of Contextual Theologies**

Schreiter’s notions of the ‘prophets’ and ‘poets’ as players in the making of a contextual theology touch the very nature of the balance of the overall contextual process: prophets give an expression of the gospel in the community; poets capture the ‘rhythm and contour’ of the experience of the community. However, the process of contextual theology is not minimized to either one of them for they both are essential parts (1985: 18-19). In a tribal community, like the Nuu-chah-nulth, where the influence and knowledge of Christianity are scarce, prophetic and poetic inputs are gradually spearheaded by the movement of the community itself.

Over the last 200 years of the exposure to Christianity, the gospel narrative influenced and naturally shaped the stories of the Nuu-chah-nulth people, in the way of appropriating it to their culture. A number of the origin myths were naturally shaped to a parallel, ready

to be compared to the Christian worldview: creator, the world, community, and possibly salvation. These theological processes seem to have been slowly carried out by natural cultural synthesis, with them not consciously driven.

The balance of prophetic (gospel) and poetic (experience) is at the centre of different approaches to a contextual theology. Bevans presented a cascade of contextual theology models in six different forms (2012); namely, the translation model, the anthropological model, the praxis model, the synthetic model, the transcendental model, and the countercultural model. The word ‘model,’ as Schreiter noted, explains how the contextual theology arrives at theology and suggests specific interests or principles that help to guide the process (1985: 6). The first two contextual models were discussed here because the comparison between these two renders a justification for a theological model that was used in this study.

### **2.3 The Translation Model**

The translation model not only translates words and grammar but also translate the meaning of the Bible and tradition into cultural languages and symbols. It is also a model that discovers the spirit of the Bible so that it can understand it culturally. So, it needs to be idiomatic, or must to be done by functional or dynamic equivalence. The aim of this dynamic-equivalence method of translation is to elicit the same reaction in contemporary hearers or readers as in the original hears or readers. Bevans notes that the translation model applies to every model of contextual theology. However, the centre of gravity of the model lies in the text and tradition. In that sense, the model can be understood as a translation of traditional theology in a context (Bevans 2012: 37-53).

Schreiter viewed the translation model as a two-step process. First, a traditional theology frees its Christian message as much as possible from its previous cultural accretions so, for the second step, a new cultural situation can apply the data of revelation in their culture (1985: 7). In the past century, European and North American theologians

attempted so call de-Hellenization of Western Christendom which meant to remove Greek categories from the biblical revelation. The dynamic-equivalent method used in Bible translation is something similar to this model where specific terms and ideas in the Bible in one culture were replaced with the equivalents of which are then sought in the local language.

However, the problem with the model is that the differences between the fundamental world view based on culture and the paradigm of understanding of religion cannot be overcome by a simple translation. Peelman asserted that making of contextual theology involves broader and deeper interactions with the entire culture since culture largely defines who they are. The contextual dialogue is perceived not as ‘the encounter between parallel religious systems but as a personal experience of integration’ (Peelman 2006:17). The Jesuit priest Pedro Arrup marked that contextual theology is ‘the incarnation of Christian life and the Christian message in a particular cultural context’ (Shorter 1998: 11), and that it is an incarnation for it is such a way that this process not only finds expression through the proper element to the culture but becomes a norm to guide the culture, transforming it and remaking it so as to bring about a new creation. Arrup viewed a contextual theology more than what the translation can establish but is an experience can give birth to a new creation. He used the word ‘incarnation’ to signify that contextual theology is wildly new, compared to one existed before, and yet delivered in an environment familiar to the people in the context.

### **2.3.1 Indigenous Theology in the Translation Model**

Twiss, a Sicangu Lakota, was converted to ‘Western’ Christianity and became a pan-Indian activist. The early part of his writings and activism focused on advocating Indigenous cultural ways of Christian expressions in worship. He acknowledged that the historical inference that Christianity would be communicated to Indigenous people in

North America by white people as was seen through the vision of Indigenous elders whom he respected. In his humble demeanour, he wrote:

In the providence of Almighty God believe it was His plan that the white man from across the great water would deliver the sacred message of Jesus to the First Nations of this continent. Our gracious heavenly Father redeems our worst blunders and causes all things to work together for good. Had the roles been reversed, I doubt we Native people would have performed any better than the Europeans (2000: 25).

He adhered to the ideas that Christianity was not only a religion of white people but also destined to reveal to Indigenous people of North America, and the received form of the Christianity, traditionally western, posed no significant difficulty for them to understand the Christian message. His concern was to use more cultural expressions of Indigenous people. He envisioned Indigenous believers to be ‘full of passion for God, strength and beauty, using their traditional dances, music and colourful dress to speak to captivated audiences worldwide’ (2000: 19). His theological thoughts mainly operated in the view of Western Christianity which limited contextualization to be only adopting the expressions of Indigenous cultures. But, also, he believed that the Indigenous people in North America was uniquely positioned for world evangelization (2000: 19).

Moreover, Twiss related the use of Indigenous expressions to the controversy over the electric guitars and drums in the 70s and 80s in the Christian worship which eventually subsided. He wanted the Church to fully adopt the use of Indigenous drums, guards, rattles and dances as legitimate expressions of godly faith (2000:21). As he heard the news report about a white pastor of Canadian church prevented the spiritual dance of Indigenous Canadian people which was not of the Western Christian tradition, he lamented how little are the general understandings of the Christianity of different cultural groups, especially of the indigenous people, in Canadian society (2015: 26). He explicated the slowness in Indigenous people coming to Christ the lack of cultural translation:

My twenty years of observation and participation in mission activities among First Nations people has made it evident that rather than good news, the ‘Good News’ story remains highly ineffective among Native people, and for many, it means bad news.



After hundreds of years of missionary efforts, an extremely low number of Native people are actively engaged in a life of faith in Jesus and participation in some Christian tradition (2015: 28).

He maintained that the Christian message in the form it was received was good but translating it in Indigenous context was necessary. His ideas for an Indigenous theology align as closely as what Bevans and Schreiter would describe as the translation model. The goal of Twiss' contextualization lies in maintaining traditional Christianity with Indigenous cultural expressions.

Besides, pan-Indigenous approach to contextual theology is considered a socio-political movement that has a little concern for the contextualization of individual Indigenous cultures. Thus, it has obvious limits, since there is 'no single Native American theology for all' (Kidwell et al. 2001: ix). Indigenous scholars tell that there can be no unified expression of Indigenous culture. However, it is a habit of non-Indigenous to 'unconsciously homogenize Indigenous groups, levelling differences' among them.

### **2.3.2 Syncretism and Dual Religious System**

Two problems usually surface when the gospel enters to a non-Western context: 'syncretism and dual religious systems' (Schreiter 1985: 146). Doing a contextual theology within the rubrics of the translation model may bring out more tension between syncretism and contextualization. Because, as aforementioned, the centre of gravity of the translation model lies in the text and tradition and thus, the model can be understood as a translation of traditional theology in a context. The etymology of the word 'syncretism' suggests that it has to do with mixing or crashing of two religious systems that damages 'basic structure and identity' (Schreiter 1985: 144). However, whether Indigenous culture and spirituality can be seen as a religious system is a topic of another study.

Nevertheless, Adrian Jacobs, Indigenous leader, defines syncretism as 'the attempted reconciliation or union of different or opposing principles or practices or parties, as in

philosophy or religion. It is the attempted union of principles of parties irreconcilably at variant with each other, especially the doctrines of certain religionists' (2003: 3). Jacobs maintains that Christianity exists above culture, and it must be that the text and tradition which guides constructing a contextual theology. The proper scope of cultural interpretation is permissible only as it continues the basic structure and tradition of Christian theology. It seems that the problem of syncretism is a dreadful topic to some in choosing the model of indigenous theology, seeing that the term is being used as a tool to justify a certain class of theology.

Syncretism is the most feared response to Native culture among most Evangelical Christian. No one wants to compromise his or her commitment to Christ and the importance of His redemptive work. Syncretism in this context means taking non-Biblical Native beliefs and practices and making them one with Christianity. There are many areas of Native beliefs that are in agreement with the Bible. There are other areas where there is obvious and serious disagreement. (from NAIITS vol.1, no 1)<sup>1</sup>

Using a spiritual dance in Christian worship was acceptable to Twiss. However, making an assumption about the similarities between Christian tradition and certain cultural practice 'without qualification' was perceived 'dangerous' to him (2000: 127). His definition of 'unqualified' is 'adopting foreign forms but interpreting them largely in local ways' (2000:127). The words he used, 'unqualified' and 'foreign,' are rather ambiguous because his qualification of 'unqualified' and 'foreign' seems to be in his internal system. The conceptual framework of contextualization for Twiss mainly came from the theological ideas and languages of Western theology. His method is to evaluate individual tradition or ceremony of Indigenous cultures, instead of looking at the theological process of cultural formation.

Twiss used the Native American Church (NAC)'s practice of *peyote* in their services as an example of syncretism. The NAC uses the Bible and Christian songs in their

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<sup>1</sup> NAIITS is short name for North American Indigenous Institute of Theological Studies. The quote is from their journal publication labelled NAIITS vol. 1, no.1.

services. But what sets them apart from the rest of the Christian Churches, Twiss argues, is the prescribed use of the hallucinogenic drug found in peyote. He perceived that the hallucinating nature of the plant was to enhance one's closeness to God, making him or her holier. He provided three definitions for which to measure the threshold of syncretism:

Syncretism is a belief or practice, whether in Anglo (white) church on Sunday morning or in a Native ceremony, that attempts to replace or distort the historical doctrines of justification, righteousness, atonement, holiness, redemption, sanctification, salvation, and so; anything that tries to replace, augment or add to the long-standing doctrines of historical Christianity; and any belief or practice that says Christ's work is not enough (Twiss 2000: 128).

However, Heart (1998), from the opposite side, argues that the use of *peyote* is symbolic, and it is a 'medicine from the Creator' to help people. Prayers are not made to the peyote, and the people who participate in the sacramental peyote are not concerned with what it contains but it helps them in the worship of God, and they use it as a symbolic sacrament, 'much as the Christian use of wine in the communion and the Jewish people in the Passover celebrations' (Heart et al. 1998: 203).

Schreiter noted that Christian literature regarding syncretism has always taken a negative stance toward the phenomenon. Anything that would dilute or substantially alter the basic structures of Christianity was combated strongly. The importance of keeping the gospel message 'pure' and 'unadulterated' has been a constant concern of the Christian church (1985: 144).

The fundamental reason for the phenomenon of religious syncretism is that the two cultures or religions that are encountered have separately developed without intercommunicating or affecting each other over indefinite past. Therefore, if a Hindu Indian came to believe in Christianity, he would not become a Westerner but remain Hindu. Indigenous Americans also did not become white after they believed in Christianity and remained Indigenous. It is said that the Christian natives became more aware of the spirituality of their culture after believing in Christianity. Conversion to Christian faith did not displace their native spirituality. These phenomena appear weak in

some cultures and strong in others. In cultures that were close to Western Christian culture and were in its sphere of influence, the Western Christianity is accepted almost as it is, but in cultures that are isolated or not under the cultural influence, this dual form of faith appears strong.

Schreiter suggested some practical considerations for approaching syncretism (1985: 157-158). First, he pointed out that if the message of the gospel is genuinely heard in the local culture, the message must find a place among the most fundamental idea of the culture, with a concomitant change in codes, signs, and the entire sign system. The eventual change would be mutual: 'Christ can be found in culture but making that discovery explicit will have consequences for the culture' (1985: 157). He also pointed out that religion, for certain people, cannot be reduced simply to a set of ideas. Religion means varies from culture to culture, from private voluntary association to a culture to which one born. The culturally understood gospel is seldom abandoned by the believers with its cultural identity because they do not see Christianity as an alien set of religious ideology but understand it as their own. Second, syncretism and dual religious systems are about the 'entirety of the religious sign system' and not really concerned with theology. By this, he meant, replacing a biblical figure in the bible to an Indigenous elder cannot be done theologically, but 'by looking at the entirety of the sign system which social relations it maintains, what problem it solves, what benefit accrue from keeping things as they are' (1985: 157). This movement of change introduces the anthropological model of contextual theology. While the translation model brings a saving message into the context and makes sure the message is delivered in a relevant and attractive way, the anthropological model engages in looking for the revelation and self-manifestation of God as it is hidden in the values, relational patterns, and concerns of a context (Bevans 2012: 56). The missionary in the translation model is seen as 'pearl merchant,' the missionary in the anthropological model 'treasure hunter' (Rush 1991: 45-57).

## **2.4 The Anthropological Model**

The anthropological model of contextual theology, Bevans explains, is at the opposite end of the spectrum from the translation model. If the primary concern of the translation model is the preservation of Christian identity while attempting to take culture, social change, and history seriously, the primary concern of the anthropological model is the establishment or preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith. This model centres on the value and goodness of the human person, human experience as it is realized in culture, social change, geographical and historical circumstances. It sees that God's hidden presence can be manifested in the ordinary structures of the situation. It also considers the more general human categories of life, wholeness, healing, and relationship as the standards of genuine religious expression rather than corresponding with a particular message (Bevans 2012: 55). Thus, the anthropological model is shaped by a special concern with authentic cultural identity. This model places importance on their 'cultural identity and continuity,' as it focuses on how traditional theology can be understood by people belonging to a culture (Schreiter 1985: 13-15).

The anthropological model is chosen for the study because the parallel theological concepts and terms of the traditional Christian theology are not readily available in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture. As well, since religion, with most of its theological languages, is a western construct (Schreiter 1985: 149), attempting to translate them in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture might cause misgivings. The indigenous theology of the Nuu-chah-nulth can be found through the observation and study of their native culture, namely, origin myths, traditional feasts, rituals, and contact history. The same explains why each main chapter headings of the study start with their traditional cultural feature.

## **2.5 Criteria for Orthodoxy**

Contextual theology needs to be constructed based on orthodox Christian theology. There could be an error in contextual theology in bringing in elements that are entirely different

from Christian orthodoxy. Giving extra weight to cultural factors in contextual theology can make the error of bringing about ideas that are different from Christian orthodoxy or reducing it to a kind of 'culture theology' that excludes the elements of orthodox Christianity. This fear raised the concern about the possibility of 'syncretism' about contextualizing theology, among evangelical scholars (Conn 1992: 176-184). As well, Roman Catholic papal documents such as *Evangelii Nuntiandi* encourage 'theological expression which takes account of differing cultural, social, and even racial milieu,' but they still caution that the content of the faith 'must be neither impaired nor mutilated' (1975: 65).

The issues of pluralism in our contemporary theology challenge contextual theologians to search for criteria of orthodoxy. The question is posed this way:

If there are so many divergent, and sometimes apparently conflicting interpretations, how can we be sure that our understanding of our faith is correct, that is, faithful to the Judeo-Christian tradition? Is it possible to recognize the one faith in the different interpretations? Does pluralism not become an ideology of adaptation when what is adapted or inculturated is considered to be correct? Should we not, perhaps, re-introduce at least some basic and universal truths, conceptually expressed and accepted as such? (De Mesa and Wostyn 1982: 86).

De Mesa and Wostyn present three criteria for orthodoxy (1982: 103-117). First, since the Christian message has basic intentionality, 'a new, contextual formulation of faith or doctrine should be oriented in the same direction' like other 'successful or approved formulation.' For Christians, the basic religious proposal is 'God is Love' (Bevans 2012: 23). If there were ethical principles used to guide human culture before the concept of religion sprouted up on this planet, it was love. Generally, the theme of God's love is to be accepted as a cosmic fact and seen as a motive for creation. Anything that would run in a contrary direction could not at all be an appropriate Christian theological expression. Second, de Mesa and Wostyn (1982: 103-117) propose a criterion of Christian orthopraxis. A theological expression that would lead to actions that are clearly un-Christian, e.g., hatred of the oppressor or the taking of innocent life, could never be considered orthodox, no matter how meaningful it might be in a culture. Reversely, an

expression that seems at first unorthodox might be justified in that it leads a group to truly Christian behaviour. Third, there is the criterion of acceptance by the people of God, or proper reception. Theology is the creation of the whole church, and when the church as a whole seems to accept particular theological teaching, one can trust it as a genuine one.

Schreiter also discussed five criteria of the authentic Christian faith to be engaged in constructing a contextual theology. Like de Mesa and Wostyn, he first proposed 'inner consistency,' although 'not always a consistency of a linear kind' (Schreiter 1985: 118). Christianity believes that God loves the human race, gives mercy, judges to have good in the human world, and praises and rewards the righteous, but theological logic that contradicts this cannot be the standard of contextual theology.

However, Schreiter noted that this consistency was not always the one of 'a linear kind.' Often in the Christology of non-Western or tribal theology, the historical person of Jesus is not seen as the incarnated reality of salvation because it is not easy for historical figures to be mediated culturally. When the gospel was delivered to them, missionaries brought the redemptive story instead of Jesus himself. Thus, the second person in Trinity renders a cultural difficulty to be understood as a redeemer as a historical figure. However, any past attempt to substitute a culture hero of local narratives to Jesus Christ in local theologizing was rejected by the Christian theology.

The second criterion is that a true expression of context theology should lead to worship to God. Schreiter used a Latin phrase *lex orandi lex credendi* – that the way we pray points to the way we believe and *vice versa* (1985: 119). The third criterion proposed is, much in line with de Mesa and Wostyn, that the practices that are contradictory to the basic ideas of Christian theology cannot be justified as a contextual expression of theology. Fourth, a developing contextual theology should be open to and judged by other theology (1985: 120). The architecture of contextual theology should be open to comparison with existing theology and exposed to intense discussion and criticism with existing theology for the establishment of new expressions. Theology created in isolation

is at risk of heresy. Fifth, Schreiter proposes the criterion of the strength of theology to challenge other theology. The influence of the theology of liberation was not limited to Latin American theologies but challenge feminist theologies of various part of the world including Asia and black liberation theology.

## **2.6 Postcolonial and Liberation Theology**

Seeking to develop a true and strong identity of nations and cultures is another part of the motivation for contextual theology. Colonialism fostered a feeling among people in the colonized world that anything really good and worthwhile came from the West and whatever was their own was inferior or worthless. Towards to the end of the colonial era or when the treaty negotiations were settled and ensured the self-governance of Indigenous groups, the people who were formerly colonized began to have the confidence to work things out on their own terms and in their ways. In the areas of religious practice and theology, the need to express the new consciousness of independence and self-worth was particularly important.

'Postcolonial' studies the impacts of the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism, focusing on the consequences of the control and exploitation of colonized people and their environments. The colonialism often refers to a system of control and to an ideology or culture underlying that control. In general, 'postcolonial' represents an ideological response to and seeking liberation from colonialist thought. Desmond Tutu captured this idea in his writing in the earlier part of this movement:

African theologians have set about demonstrating that the African religious experience and heritage were not illusory and that they should have formed the vehicle for conveying the Gospel verities to Africa ... It was vital for Africa's self-respect that this kind of rehabilitation of his religious heritage should take place. It is the theological counterpart of what has happened in, say, the study of African History. It has helped to give the lie to the supercilious but tacit assumption that religion and history in Africa date from the advent in that continent of the white men. It is reassuring to know that we have had a genuine knowledge of God and that we have had our own ways of communicating with a deity, ways which meant that we were able to speak authentically as ourselves and not as pale imitations of others. It means that we have a great store from which we can fashion new ways of speaking to and about God, and a new style of worship consistent with our new faith (Tutu 1978:366).



For Tutu, upholding his traditional religious heritages in theologizing is for their self-respect. It is to restore and to validate their cultural/ religious identity.

Liberation theology is a political movement in Christian theology, which understand the gospel in terms of liberation from unjust political, economic, social, and cultural conditions. It has been described as an interpretation of Christian faith through the sufferings, the struggles, and the hope of the poor and oppressed. Indigenous theological discussions often began as reactions to colonial interaction with Christianity.

Leblanc classifies the class of Indigenous scholars who engage in these discussions into two camps: 'liberal and acculturative' (Leblanc 2015). The liberal camp operates with the liberation disposition and concludes that nothing of value came to Indigenous people when the white people came into their lives. George Tinker, in his historical study, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide*, on four prominent missionaries, concluded that Euro-American missionaries were part of the colonial conspiracy and their objectives were 'the extinction of Indigenous culture' (Tinker 1993). The reason for this determination came from an observation that missionaries who came during the colonial era were insensible to the distinction between the Christian gospel and Western culture, and consequently, the elimination of Indigenous culture was an intrinsic part of colonial Christian missions. Tinker dismissed the Christian missionaries in all denominations working among Indigenous nations as partners in genocide. He also emphasized that the process of Christianization of Indigenous people fostered the internalization of the even more damaging and lasting illusion of Indian inferiority and the idolization of white culture and religion. The sphere of his main theological interests stayed within liberation theology of Indigenous people (Tinker 1993: 3).

In attempts to liberate them from the colonial mentality and its lurking psychological effects, postcolonial Indigenous theology seems always to edge with liberation way of theologizing.

## **2.7 Indigenous Christology**

As the Papal address to introduce the Second Vatican Council affirmed that ‘the substance of the ancient doctrine of the deposit of faith is one thing, and the way in which it is presented is another’ (Abbot 1966: 715). Peelman assessed that the church renewal of this kind, which facilitates contextual theological expressions from various non-Western contexts to contribute to a widening of the Christian theology could not occur without an in-depth reflection on the relationship between Christianity and the Indigenous cultures, and without a corresponding Christological vision (1995: 13). Although the historic encounter between Western missionaries and Indigenous Americans has yet to produce the results of the Christian Church expected by the pioneering missionaries, in the culture of Indigenous tribes, the images of Christ in their own right are being created. There can be no Indigenous church without an Indigenous Christ. Within the contemporary ecumenical movement, the Christological challenge is seen to slowly replacing merely ecclesiological preoccupations which also inspires the larger dialogue between Christianity and other religions (Peelman 1995: 14).

### **2.7.1 Who Do They Say that I Am?**

Jesus asked his disciples two thousand years ago, ‘Who do they say that I am?’ It has become the most enduring question of the Christian life, in terms of the faith of individuals, of the character of denominations, and Christian intellectual discourse. Indigenous theology makes some attempt to address the question in various ways.

Indigenous scholars of the ‘liberal camp’ suggest the ways to approach Indigenous Christology. They point out how some customary Euro-Christian language is inappropriate for Indigenous imaginations and suggests that there might be more appropriate representations which include the text and context for referencing Jesus and the Christ in a Christian Indigenous context. Their theology re-evaluates the suitability or

appropriateness of even this project in the healing process of a colonized community damaged socially, emotionally and spiritually by the past five hundred years of conquest and destruction (Kidwell et al., 2001: 63).

These scholars equate the suffering of Jesus for the salvation of humankind with a variety of ceremonies whereby the Indigenous individuals took on a discipline of vicarious suffering for the sake of the people as a whole. They see that these ceremonies share the common principle that ‘the individual undertaking the ceremony undergoes a discipline of suffering on behalf of the people’ (2001: 64). They allude that the Indigenous people have no difficulty expressing respect for Jesus as a spiritual person while they may have resistance toward church and Christianity. While the Indigenous peoples have a spiritual understanding of the world which is inherently amenable to some central Christian concepts, such as grace, these scholars reject the notion that their cultural ideas are not ‘spiritual puzzle pieces’ which can be locked into a universal Christian truth. But they want to see that Indigenous spiritual traditions are unique in their own right (Kidwell et al. 2001: 70). These scholars substitute the basic Christian notion of ‘Jesus the Christ’ with the idea that the ‘historical Jesus’ and the ‘historic Christ’ were not one-to-one equivalency but to be generative of faith in Jesus as the Christ (2001: 77). Given some of these examples of theological logic, it is hard to qualify these theological efforts to be orthodox Christian theology. Their theological reasoning appears to be arguably aimed at achieving political ends and goes beyond the limits of Christian theology.<sup>2</sup>

### **2.7.2 Christological Challenge**

The quest of Indigenous Christ remains the most important task in Indigenous Christian theology, which has not been solved by the political motivation of the Indigenous

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<sup>2</sup> Some Indigenous theological studies tend to engage in courageous (radical) theological imagination and narrative tools for vital ministry towards Indigenous political survival.

liberation theologians mentioned above. This Christological quest is an intrinsic dimension of the contemporary Indigenous movement whereby situated in inescapability from the impact of western culture and the dominant society, but they claim the right to be different and to control their own future (Peelman 1995: 17). Indigenous people understand that they should look first of all to their tradition for the revitalization of their cultures and the preservation of their communities. Once again, they want to drink from their own wells without necessarily turning their back on Christianity. Indigenous revitalization is primarily a spiritual movement wherein ancestral religions are gaining new forms of visibility, and traditional Indigenous medicine becoming popular. Indigenous peoples today view that the right to be Indigenous as members of the modern world and the return to their traditional values as the best guarantee for their cultural survival (Cleary 1989).

On the other hand, it should be noted that the spiritual traditions of the Indigenous peoples are at a level that is sufficient to discuss Christian theology. Past researches on Indigenous rituals seemed to forget that the Indigenous nations of North America had developed complex systems of highly theological and philosophical thinking (Burr 1953: 163). The sun dance of the Plain Indians explains the extraordinary metaphysics surrounding the rite (Jorgenson 1972). The Indigenous vision of the Great Mystery (God) and the Indigenous interpretations of nature are the sources of human wisdom and of an ethics of responsibility for our planetary eco-systems which the West struggles with the limits of their philosophical system (Deloria 1992: 78-97). The reason it was assumed that Indigenous people did not have the concept of a supreme being is that their spiritual encounters with God occur in the ordinary elements of daily life, as compared to the experiences in institutional religion in the West. Thus, the study of cultural practice and spirituality is where we find the interpretation of Indigenous religious experience. Indigenous wisdom must fully intergrade with Indigenous Christianity as they seek to find cultural continuity into the broader Christianity. Peelman stresses that the

understanding of Indigenous Christ must be found in Indigenous religious experience to determine whether we consider the Indian missions of Canada a success or failure. Hence, their ancestral spirituality remains the true place where we will eventually discover the hidden face of the ‘Amerindian (Indigenous) Christ’ (Peelman 2006: 20).

## **2.8 ‘Christic Mystery’**

Indigenous peoples responded creatively to the missionary action of the Christian church with their cultural and religious ideas. Their unique responses transcend the expectations of the missionaries and the objectives of their churches. Peelman noted,

Instead of stating that the Amerindians have become Christian, but that Christianity never became Indian, it would be more exact to say that the Amerindians have not become Christian like us and that they have not spontaneously joined our western churches. After their conversion, they managed to create their own expressions of Christianity on the fringe of the official churches and often in opposition to them. They often reinterpreted the Christian faith from the cultural vantage point of their own religious experience. Some have turned their back on the church while others commit themselves to the Amerindian renewal of their Christian communities. All these tendencies represent a wide spectrum of cultural and religious developments which need the attention to theological interpretation (Peelman 2006:83).

The creative responses have emerged in the form of syncretic and prophetic movements, the independent church movement, and dimorphic religious stance, but the critical base of this interpretation has to be the emergence of the mystical presence of Christ in the mission, which validates the space for an Indigenous interpretation that comes from their cultural and religious experience. This interpretation implies that we cannot deduce Christian missions only in sociology, anthropology, and the church’s mission strategy. But, the mission of the church is understood to serve the mystery of Jesus Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the world. Christ himself reveals a mysterious presence among those who welcome his gospel.

During his visit to Canada in 1985, Pope John Paul II spoke: ‘Thus, the one faith is expressed in different ways. There can be no question of adulterating the Word of God or of emptying the Cross of its power, but rather of Christ animating the very centre of all

cultures. Thus, not only is Christianity relevant to the Indian peoples but Christ in the members of his Body is himself Indian' (John Paul II 1984: 368).

Peelman believes that the Indigenous Christ is found not directly as the inculturation of the church. As the centrality of the Word of God and the power of the Cross were evoked in the Papal statement, the theological foundation of this search must be the historical person of Jesus himself whom the Indigenous people of North America can encounter through the mission activity of the church (2006: 93). This statement is not to say that this orientation has to come from the perspective of the science of religions which sets out to analyse all the implications of the historical encounter between Christianity and the Indigenous people objectively. But it is to see the confession of faith in Jesus as the universal Christ.

The same Papal statement which made the priority to maintain the absolute position of historical Jesus also discreetly invite us to develop a theological discourse on the presence of Christ with cultures (2006: 95). Peelman noted that it has not been easy to maintain the 'paradoxical link between Jesus and the universal meaning of his salvific message' as encountered in the entire history of Christianity (2006: 94). Jacques Dupuis demonstrated the paradox of the particularity and the universality of Jesus Christ as 'the cardinal key question' of the Christian theology of religions (1991: 191). In modern times various attempts to reduce the status of Jesus to a mere symbol which is no longer considered as the only road to God (Knitter 1985). This question lies in the centre of the search for Indigenous Christ.

To understand or to see the implications of the Christic mystery, Peelman asserts, we need to perceive the basic link and necessary distinctions between the mission of Jesus, the mission of the Church, and the mission of the Spirit. With the understanding that the mission of the Church has no absolute control over the mysterious providence of God with humankind and the world, we can perceive that the Spirit, who operates fully in the fullness of Christ, is at work in everywhere in the humanity (2006: 95). He asserted that

the Indigenous culture itself constitutes the 'Body' that permits Christ to become truly Indigenous: 'While God has received a unique human face in the person of Jesus, he continued to reveal himself in many other ways throughout history (2006: 95).

Jesus Christ is the very source of each human being's search for God because in him this search has already reached its fulfilment. The death and resurrection of Jesus is also our death and resurrection (Rom 4:25). The unique mystery which has accomplished itself in Jesus Christ is made universality available through the gift of his Spirit to each human person and the entire world. Distinctions of race, culture, or religion should not be seen as obstacles to the Christic mystery, the entire creation receives the centre towards which all the search for the Christic mystery of [Indigenous] culture (2006: 96).

Over the last few centuries, the meeting of Indigenous cultures and Christianity has generated some creative responses and ideas. But this meeting has not yet produced a truly indigenous church. These responses and ideas can neither be the process to lead to a church that is entirely truthful to the indigenous people. On the other hand, from the onset of the encounter between Christianity and Indigenous culture, Indigenous culture moved voluntarily toward the redemptive message of Christ, and, carefully observed, signs of that can be seen in their culture. Jesus is not easily called in the language of their cultures, but it manifests in creative ways in their cultures.

## **2.9 Research Gap**

The study was about finding how the cultural elements found in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture help a Nuu-chah-nulth person to understand Christianity in their cultural way. The study constituted the constructing a Nuu-chah-nulth contextual theology. The study followed the anthropological contextual model that focuses on preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith and centres on the value and goodness of the human person, human experience as it is realized in culture, social change, geographical and historical circumstances (2.4). Thus, this study dealt with tentative aspects of Christian theology which contrast the theology of traditional Christianity. Having become aware that Indigenous Christology is the focal point in searching for the contour of Indigenous

Christianity, the study explored origin myths, traditional festivals, ceremonials, and the conflicts in the historic meeting between their culture and Christianity.

The literature and other materials on the Nuu-chah-nulth traditional culture give significant value to the Indigenous contextual theology because, as part of the cultural revitalization movement, they too are examining them. As they reinterpret and give new meanings to their past, the study also needs to pay attention to and follow the cultural traditions they kept in their community life to date and the cultural factors they are re-inventing. With the search for the figure of the Indigenous Christ, along with the concepts of the Trinity, the study considered the Indigenous religious experience; the Indigenous worldview; and their struggles as Indigenous people, in the following chapters. The main study objective was to find the main theological themes related to the ideas of Trinity and other important Christian theology in the culture of the Nuu-chah-nulth.









## CHAPTER THREE

### NUU-CHAH-NULTH ORIGIN STORY

#### 3.1 Introduction:

This chapter is a study of the Nuu-chah-nulth origin myth. The primary aim of the study in this chapter is to address the research sub-question: What are the continuing philosophical ideas stored in the Nuu-chah-nulth myth of origin? The chapter mainly deals with the worldview of the Nuu-chah-nulth and religious ideas were obtained from the ideas stored in their oral traditions, specifically from the origin myth. The first part of the chapter (sections 3.1, 3.2, and 3.3) explained how and why the Nuu-chah-nulth origin myths could inform us of an understanding of their worldview, religious, and theological concepts. In the second part (sections 3.4), the study discussed what kind of theological, philosophical, relational, and cultural ideas emerge from the narrative and thematic analyses of the Nuu-chah-nulth origin myth.

More specifically, the study explored the philosophical ideas of the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview, examining how their theistic ideas compare with those of other religions and studying the cultural factors underlying their worldviews and their influences on the formation of their religious ideas. Also, through observing linguistic habits associated in their myths, the study analysed how the contact with western Christian culture altered the forms and contents of their myths, which could also shed light on their appropriation of their Christianity.

Therefore, the study in this chapter addressed the main research question, ‘How can the religious ideas embedded in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture give an understanding of the Christianity to a Nuu-chah-nulth person?’ from the perspective of the Nuu-chah-nulth philosophy.

### **3.2 Oral Narrative and Collective Memory**

According to Jan Vansina, in *Oral Tradition as History*, no one in oral societies doubts that memories can be faithful repositories which contain the sum total of past human experience and explain the how and why of present-day conditions. Whether memory changes or not, culture is reproduced by remembrance put into words and deeds (Vansina 1985:xi). Oral traditions consist of all verbal testimonies or statements concerning the past that are transmitted from one person to another via the medium of language (Vansina 2006:19-20). Indigenous oral traditions encompass a canon of narrative forms that include stories, legends, myths, histories, folklore, prayers, songs, music, performance, and ceremonies that are transmitted from generation to generation and, therefore, become widely known. The telling and performance of these narratives teach morals, life lessons, history, spirituality, economics, politics and the environment (Carroll 2005; Cruikshank 1998). The continual transmission and performance of these narratives generate a collective memory. The stories, songs, and dances contained in oral traditions serve to bind people to each other and to the social, physical, and spiritual worlds in which they are placed and where they interact with each other and with the non-human world (Boyd 2005:665).

#### **3.2.2 *Himwitsa Humwie'a* - Tradition of Storytelling**

Culture and tradition not only influence the thinking and behaviour of the Indigenous people but also are respected and revered by them. No public ceremony occurs without retelling, either in recital or a dance re-enactment, of the origin myths of the people, as still practiced in their potlatches or other important ceremonies. Family stories are integrated individually into the larger corpus of hero mythology, so that every family and person of title were in some specific way linked to the events and forces of the universe.

No idle discussion would be complete without referring to mythology and tales. Everyone knows their stories so well that ordinary speech was and is frequently flavoured by allusions to the characters, and even to specific incidents of the stories.<sup>1</sup> Storytelling is a widespread practice of religion and cultural traditions for the Indigenous people in the Pacific Northwest. The Nuu-chah-nulth has its origin stories. *Umeek*, a Nuu-chah-nulth elder and a hereditary chief of Ahousaht,<sup>2</sup> in unison with others who have articulated about their storytelling, describes:

Nuu-chah-nulth origin stories were typically told in family settings... Their traditional houses are called big houses. The size of the house was as large as 40 feet by 100 feet, holding several nuclear families that belonged to the same extended family... during long winter evenings... the family gathered around the warmth of ancient fires... that were connected to ancestral fires... that was connected to the original fires... Each story was also connected to ancestral storytellers who had heard the story from the original storytellers (Atleo 2004).

The Nuu-chah-nulth call their storytelling *himwitsa humwie'a* tradition, one of the ways in which they understand the culture and history. Through their oral traditions, they perceive a past in which their 'ancestors' have been part of the land they presently occupy (McMillan 2011:30), although their perception of a past may change from time to time.

### **3.2.2.1 From Generation to Generation**

This tradition continues, not at the traditional ancient fire, but in contemporary settings, like a dinner table at the grandparents' house. Mothers, grandmothers, and fathers tell the story, but the principal storytellers of the Nuu-chah-nulth household are grandfathers. The

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<sup>1</sup> Once, an Ahousaht friend humorously named me '*Bisheq*.' I did not know the story behind this historic person but everyone else did. *Bisheq* was a chief who made many mistakes and caused troubles to the community.

<sup>2</sup> Ahousaht. One of the 14 sub-divisions of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribe, out in the coastal region, also the most populated reserve amongst them. According to Umeek, the Nuu-chah-nulth place name 'Ahous' refers to the original village site of Ahousaht people on Vargas Island, currently uninhabited. 'Ahousaht' is located on Flores Island, on the Maaqtusiis land reserve. The word 'Ahousaht' means 'people of Ahous' (similarly, Hesquiaht and Cla-o-qui-aht translate as 'people of Hesqui' and people of Cla-o-qui' respectively) but this misunderstanding of the name by English-speaking government officials was carried into government documents and consequently Ahousaht is now a place name.

grandfathers told the stories in both the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language and English. The younger generation Nuuchahnulth who live on their villages still get to hear the stories on many family occasions. A Nuuchahnulth woman in her 40s recounts her cherished childhood memory, in the 1960s and the 1970s, of her grandfather's storytelling, 'This [storytelling] would go on all evening, with my grandfather clicking his teeth and scratching his head, smiling and laughing, as we stared up at him with sheer delight on our faces' (Coté 2010:79).

### **3.2.2.2 Common Nuuchahnulth Stories**

The common Nuuchahnulth narratives, which are being told in their families, include stories about young girls and boys coming of age, stories about Wolves, Thunderbird and Whale, and their great whaling ancestors, *Kwatyat*, the Nuuchahnulth trickster-transformer, and Pitch Woman stealing little children. These stories are full of mysterious characters and imaginative plots and, therefore, very entertaining to all. But there are also plots and situations in these stories that offer warnings and instructions to the audience, especially to the children. The story of Pitch Woman (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:88-101) with its impulsive change of plots involves the instructions for children not to play on the beach when it is dark, and for a young man about bravery and sexual maturation before he finds a woman to marry. The Nuuchahnulth children receive the Nuuchahnulth traditional form of *haahuupa* (teaching), passing on valuable knowledge through a narrative structure designed to both entertain and educate younger generations.

## **3.3 Origin Story**

The Nuuchahnulth origin stories are recited often in their public ceremonies, although not exclusively in ceremonies, and since they contain the history and the belief and knowledge about who they are and where they come from, they are also told in the private family setting as often as the common traditional narratives.

The oral narrative of the Nuu-chah-nulth people falls into two basic categories. The first set of stories, for the most part, deals with the mystical era before the creation of the first humans when beings such as Raven, Deer and the trickster-transformer, *Kwatyat*, hold centre stage. Although these stories are by no means devoid of moral significance, they are full of fun and humour and may be freely told by anyone who knows them. The second set of stories is family legends that are of a very different order. Family legends begin with the creation of a particular family or sub-tribe and often trace the legendary accomplishments of the founding ancestors and their descendants down through the generations. A family legend is the property of the family whose story it tells and no one else has the right to tell it (Hoover & Museum 2000:134).

### **3.3.1 Origin Story: Family Legends**

The main part of the family legends is often given over to showing how the ancestral chiefs encounter various spiritual beings from whom they obtained powers, and how the names, songs and ritual privileges associated with these spiritual encounters were transmitted through succeeding generations to the living representatives of the family (Sapir 1919:351; Golla 1988:85). In public ceremonies the names of the originators are recalled and the stories, the songs, dances, and other privileges displayed before the origin stories, or relevant parts thereof, are recounted for all to hear.

### **3.3.2 Origin Story: Origin myths**

There are a number of written documents that recorded the Nuu-chah-nulth origin stories available for this study, as they were mentioned in Chapter One. George Clutesi, a Nuu-chah-nulth author (1905-1988), wrote the fables of Tsessaht (Clutesi 1967), Richard Atleo recaptured the Ahousaht stories in his book (Atleo 2004), and the other stories were collected as translated works of ethnographers and linguists, such as Edward Sapir and



Franz Boas. The earlier documented stories were collected orally, transcribed in the Nuuchah-nulth text, and translated to the English language.

### 3.3.3 Documenting Origin Stories

Beginning from the early 1900s, linguists, anthropologists, and historians began extensive fieldwork in indigenous communities to record and collect information on culture and traditions. Franz Boas did the most extensive in collecting and publishing the oral stories from Northwest coast (Thom 2003:3). They were concerned that Indigenous culture would eventually disappear through the process of acculturation and assimilation. As a result, what has been passed down through oral storytelling now has become part of the documented record. The book, *Nootka Texts, Tales and Ethnographical Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexical Materials*, was written by Sapir and the linguist Morris Swadesh and published in 1939. Nootka Texts was a compilation of ethnographic data and stories Sapir collected from his fieldwork with Tseshah between 1910 and 1923. An additional volume by the same authors, *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography*, was published in 1955. Alex Thomas,<sup>3</sup> a Nuuchah-nulth native speaker, assisted as the cultural and linguistic translator for the extensive collections of Sapir's works. Alex Thomas at the age of nineteen took great interest in watching Sapir record his material, picked up Sapir's notation system and gradually became an expert ethnographer and linguist. Edward Sapir was responsible for the collection of approximately 145 native language texts from the Nuuchah-nulth people in and around Port Alberni (Tseshah),

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<sup>3</sup> Alex Thomas. Edward Sapir worked with him to develop a notation system based on Franz Boas' system that could be used to write Nuuchah-nulth words (See Edward Sapir and Morris Swadesh, *Nootka Texts: Tales and Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexical Materials* – Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1939, 8-13. Edward Sapir et al., *Whaling Indians: Tales of Extraordinary Experiences, Part 1, Sapir-Thomas Texts* – Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 2000, x-xii). Even after Sapir's death in 1939, he continued to work on a writing system for T'at'aqsapa language and sent thousands of pages of language and cultural material to the National Museum of Canada. He died in 1969, and in 1974 a practical orthography based on his work was published to help Nuuchah-nulth people learn their language (*Nuuchah-nulth Phrase Book and Dictionary. Barkley Sound Dialect* – Banfield, B.C.).

British Columbia. These texts, 79 transcribed by himself, 65 by Alex Thomas, are some of the richest linguistic and ethnographic resources for the northwest coast. Sapir's notes were organized into a series of texts entitled *The Sapir-Thomas Nootka Texts*, by the National Museum of Canada, which were intended to provide a comprehensive ethnography of Nuu-chah-nulth cultural life. The only work that is rivalled with them is Franz Boas' prodigious collection (Boas 1897) from the closely related Kwakiutl but for various reasons did not receive comparable scholarly attention.<sup>4</sup>

### ***3.3.3.1 Loss of Authentic Voice in Documenting***

Numerous ethnographers have made use of the published text in the last 40 years. They have treated them as sources like any other. A limitation in Sapir and Swadesh's work lies in not counting the special potential or the special problems that arise out of using testaments in the native voice (Golla 1988:108). In their published works, the native storyteller's intentional repetitions are often deleted for editorial economy. Splitting the narratives into separate passages disengage them from the context of a specific narration. Questions of language and questions of culture often bear on one another.

### **3.3.4 Tsshaht Origin Story**

Franz Boas, working in the late nineteenth century with Tsshaht and Huupachasaht informants in the Alberni area, collected a typical example of a Nuu-chah-nulth myth (Boas 1974:159-160). A similar version of this story was collected by his former student Sapir from Tsshaht informants a few decades later (1939:45-51). This origin story is known to be unique to the Tsshaht people and the vicinity. This story is a family legend

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<sup>4</sup> Sapir's original notebooks are in the Franz Boas Collection of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia. The Original manuscripts of Thomas' texts are at the Museum of Civilization in Ottawa. The American Philosophical Society also has typescript copies of Thomas' texts and Swadesh's free translations. Among other reasons for the relative neglect of this material is the fact that they were close to half of the Swadesh's texts and the bulk of the ethnographic annotation has been never published.

that belongs to the Tsshaht. This creation story is about the creation of the first woman (*Naasayilhim*), man (*Naasiya atu*), and their creator (*Ha'wilth N'aas*). The story connects the creation to their specific territory and the Tsshaht people and culture. A reason of multiple versions of the similar stories in the same region is for each family or tribe to claim the ownership of their stories. The theory is proposed by British Functionalist after Boas (Thom 2003:7). Often the myths of Northwest coast include specific description of a territory or songs, dances and rituals are to claim their right of properties (Garfield 1966:49). Although this story pertains to the creation of Tsshaht, most Nuuchahnulth people commonly share certain terms and concepts expressed in the story.

Tsshaht is not only one of the fourteen sub-divisions of the Nuuchahnulth tribe, but also is a distinctive subgroup that is found to have more written historical records than other Nuuchahnulth groups. Unlike most of the other coastal Nuuchahnulth villages, Tsshaht is located further away from the west coast of the Pacific Ocean, linked to the rest of the tribe through Alberni Inlet and, thus, less obscured by the rugged mountain ranges that offer an easier access from the mainland of British Columbia. Tsshaht had been the main subject of ethnographical and linguistic studies by earlier ethnographers and linguists. The Tsshaht creation story has been collected from a Tsshaht member and a native speaker named 'Tom' in January 1922 by Alex Thomas.

### **3.3.5 Raven Tales**

The most widely shared origin story amongst the Nuuchahnulth is the story of Son of Raven (Clark 1953). Raven tales are also widely shared in the context of Pacific Northwest tribes, ranging from Alaska, to the interior British Columbia, Queen Charlotte Island and Vancouver Island, to the Washington and Oregon coasts. These types of stories are found widely distributed among the Indigenous people of America and generally form the greater part of the folklore of Indigenous tribes (Sapir 1919:351). Two distinctive versions of origin story, of the Nuuchahnulth tribes, are used in this study: one is the

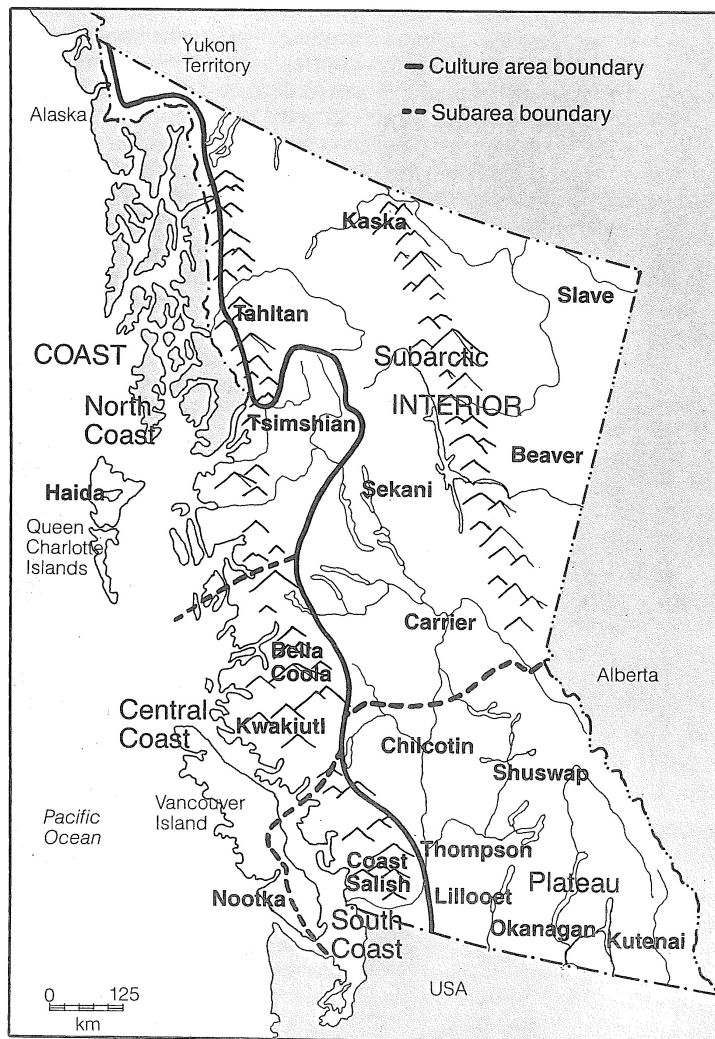
story of *Ah-tush-mit* (Son of Deer) from Tseshaht, and the other the story of *Ko-ishin-mit* (Son of Raven) from Ahousaht. These stories consist of the stories of animals that have a more or less human form, and mythological beings that do not seem to be identified with animals.

#### ***3.3.5.1 Ubiquity of Northwest Pacific Origin Stories***

The nature of collecting origin stories from the recollections of the people in the Nuuchah-nulth regions, and even from the written records, does not guarantee that the stories were purely transmitted through the lineage of the families or within the tribal boundaries. Similar stories with different characters and plots appear in the collections of origin stories of other neighbouring tribes. Even in a geographical region, the stories collected at a certain time and geography are different from the ones collected at other times and locations. The assumption that oral tradition is something uniform, something that can be treated as an undifferentiated and self-evident entity, leads to the tendency to treat oral narratives as a factual historical source. But the source materials of oral traditions need to be described and analysed in detail (Finnegan 1970:195). In the oral materials, a number of disparate sources have often been lumped together under the oral tradition.

#### ***3.3.5.2 Sources of Variations: Geography, Culture, and Language***

The people of the Pacific Northwest coast of North America lived along a narrow strip of land that extends from the mouth of Columbia River north to Yakutat Bay in Alaska. Cut off for the most part from the tribes around them by the rugged impenetrably forested mountains that rise from the sea, and relatively isolated from one another by the scarcity of habitable beach sites, they developed a variety of distinct but intertwined local traditions (Walens 1989:89). This geo-cultural group includes Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, Bella Coola, Nootka (Nuuchah-nulth), Kwakiutl groups, Coast Salish and Chinookan tribes of the Washington and Oregon coasts.



**Figure 3.1: Northwest Culture Group**

The proximate northern neighbouring tribes to the Nuu-chah-nulth, the Southern Kwakwaiutl and the Nuxalk (Kirk 1986:8) also share the linguistic structure of *Wakashan* linguistic group.<sup>5</sup> The Northern division of the Nuu-chah-nulth knew closely and often

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<sup>5</sup> The Wakashan language family consists of seven languages:

I. Northern Wakashan (Kwakiutlan) languages

1. *Haisla* (aka *Xa'islak'ala*, *X̱àẖis̱laḵala*, with two dialects: *X̱a'islaḵala* and *X̱enaksialaḵala*, spoken by the Haisla or Northern Kwakiutl) – about 200 speakers (2005)

2. *Kwak'wala* (aka Kwakiutl and Lekwiltok (*Liq̱'wala*), spoken by the Laich-kwil-tach or Southern Kwakiutl and *Kwakwaka'wakw* peoples) – 235 speakers (2000)

A. *Heiltsuk-Oowekyala* (aka Bella Bella) – about 200 speakers (2005)

3. Heiltsuk (aka Hailzaqvla, spoken by the Heiltsuk or Northern Kwakiutl)

4. Oowekyala (aka 'Uwikala, spoken by the Wuikinuxv or Northern Kwakiutl)

interacted with the Southern Kwakiutl neighbours of Quatsino Sound and the Nimkish River, and the Alberni group (Tseshaht) were intimately related to Comox, and the Central Division was in frequent contact with the Makah (Drucker 1951:151). While the cultures within each tribal area share some basic traits that distinguished them from one another, the array of linguistic, social, political, and ideological variations with each area implies continuing migrations, acculturations and cultural borrowings.

In the complex mix of their traditions including origin stories the main origin story, *the story of Son of Raven*, appears in Tlingit collection as well as Haida and Salish. Some comparative work is required to see the nature of similarity and difference and other dynamics of these stories. The story is pervasive and well known among the tribes in Pacific Northwest regions. The Tlingit has an extensive collection of their origin stories, which includes the story of Son of Raven. From the perspective of the Pacific Northwest region, the story of Son of Raven might have been originated from Tlingit and other Alaskan neighbours. But similar narrative structures such as themes, characters, and settings are also shown in the farther east, such as Ainu (Northern Japan) (Fitzhugh et al. 1999:274-277) may prove otherwise. Franz Boas proposed that the stories of Indigenous group spread widely by migration (Boas 1916:872) and the theory is sustained by his followers for a long time (Sterritt et al. 1998:15-24). But his theory on the migration of Kwakiutl (Boas 1898a:17-18) is rejected now by archaeological and linguistic evidence (Ames and Maschner 1995:86; Matson and Coupland 1995:242-6; Thompson 1979). Structurists view that the narrative features of the story may be universal to any creation

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## II. Southern Wakashan (Nootkan) languages

5. Makah (aka Q<sup>w</sup>i·q<sup>w</sup>i·diččaq, Q'widishch'a:'tx, spoken by the Makah people together with the known extinct Ozette people, who spoke 'Osi:l-'a:'tx) – extinct (last speaker died in 2002)

6. Nitinaht (aka Diidiitidq, Diitiid?aatx, Nitinat, Ditidaht, Southern Nootkan, spoken by the Ditidaht or Southern Nootka, known to themselves as Diitiid?aa?tx and Pacheedaht), located in south western Vancouver Island – 30 speakers (1991)

7. Nuuchah-nulth (aka Nuučaanuł, Nootka, Nutka, Aht, West Coast, T'aat'aaqsapa, spoken by the Nuuchah-nulth people) – 510 speakers (2005)[3] (Source from Wikipedia)

tale. Lévi-Strauss proposed that universal laws must govern mythical thought and resolve this seeming paradox, producing similar myths in different cultures (Lévi-Strauss 1975). A genetic study on Indigenous population suggested to validate the theory of Boas that the first inhabitants in North America migrated from Asia through the land bridge in the Bering sea during the late Ice Age (Wells 2002:138-140). There is a possibility that the stories have travelled through migration from the farther west.

### **3.3.5.3 Stories Merged**

While each tribe claims certain ownership of these origin stories, the apparent ubiquitous nature of the stories also suggests that the stories are often merged. This is evident in the stories of Ahousaht and Tseshahht. An insert of a negated summary of Tseshahht origin story found in Ahousaht version of the story shows these stories are often merged together to form a new version. In the Tseshahht story, their cultural hero *Ah-tush-mit* (Son of Deer) successfully brought the first fire to its people. But in the insert of Ahousaht story, the same *Ah-tush-mit* (Son of Deer) is portrayed as one who fails, but instead *Ko-ishin-mit* (Son of Raven) achieves the task. The apparent rivalry between Ahousaht and Tseshahht may be due to a long history of conflicts and wars (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:342-6; 445-52). The conflict started when a *Ts'ishaa* (Tseshahht) fisherman was beheaded by a group of Ahousaht men when he had set out from his own fishing territory and allegedly crossed over into the Ahousaht fishing territory. The two went to war at each other and the sea was 'filled with blood.' The Tseshahht have two songs, which tell of the time of the war with Ahousaht (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:352-3, 355):

Song 1:       *Weep coming around the point for a while.*  
                  *Say, when the Ahousets (Ahousaht) are a war party!*

Song 2:        *Now come along and be a war party against me, so I may do to you as I  
did to the Ahousets for I allowed none of them to go home!*

The songs suggest that the victory was perceived by the Tsessaht, although the Ahousaht may not readily admit their loss. It is only possible that their uneasiness for this part of history may be translated in the negated insertion in the main story. Thom suggests in his discussion of Northwest coast oral tradition and how anthropology is studied from the oral narrative of Indigenous tribes of Northwest that the structure of their narratives often reflect their social situations.

All social acts are imbued with relations of power and the accompanying potential for dominance, hegemony, and resistance. So even the seemingly innocuous categorization of Native oral traditions as myth or legend, house story, or tale can take on a highly potent social life in arenas where myth is transformed into common law and house stories become legal code (Thom 2003:3).

John R. Jewitt recorded in his secret journal (1803-1805), during his captive in the Nootka Inlet, that the west coast Indigenous groups were constantly at war with each other (Smith 1974:140). Warfare along the northwest coast was widespread before and during the early contact with Europeans. The objective of the wars was mainly for acquisition of slaves and canoes for the making of them was long and laborious (Dickason 2002:50).

#### ***3.3.5.4 Political Changes as Sources of Variations***

The fourteen governmentally recognized Nuuchah-nulth tribes ('bands' in official parlance) refer to be the Nuuchah-nulth (*Nuučaanuł*),<sup>6</sup> meaning 'all along alongside the mountains and sea' (Coté 2010). The Nuuchah-nulth tribes speak dialects of the same language and share a common base of culture, as well as many tangible ties of kinship

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<sup>6</sup> Nuuchah-nulth was also known as Nootka, which is a misnomer, began with Captain Cook in his initial visit to the region in 1778. Cook's ship sailed into an area known now as Nootka Sound and came upon the Mowachaht village of Yuquot, which was named Friendly Cove by Cook. He was met by the local villagers, who paddled out to the ship in their canoes to help Cook's crew navigate the rocks. They yelled to the crew a word that sounds like Nootka, a word in Wakashan language that in English means 'to circle around.'



and marriage, and they have a sense of themselves as one people, distinct from other peoples, and yet they have no commonly accepted term for this totality. Each band maintains a distinctiveness from others. A band is made up of a number of family clans whose traditional social ranks have been hierarchically ordered. Some family clans in each band owned the chiefly lineage, most of which has passed down to the date. There have been on-going political changes of alliances and amalgamations of Nuu-chah-nulth groups until the formation of the West Coast Allied Tribes (WCAT) in 1958, which led to their incorporation as a non-profit society called the West Coast District Society of Indian Chiefs (WCDSIC).<sup>7</sup> Later, they changed the name to Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC).<sup>8</sup> Nuu-chah-nulth Indigenous villages are the result of amalgamation of several chiefly families, as an invention of a tribe, and most include what were once considered as several separate local groups. This also may have been a factor causing further variations of the origin stories amongst *Nuučaanul* (Nuu-chah-nulth).

### 3.3.6 Authenticity

While the sources of the origin stories are being widely shared with other neighbouring tribes, the Nuu-chah-nulth has developed their own version of the story with some distinct set of cultural ideas and values that were adaptable to the changing fortunes and histories shared by the people. Thus, the characters and the common themes of each collected story

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<sup>7</sup> Chiefs are the only political representatives even until 1958. Chiefs are the political representatives the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

<sup>8</sup> In 1958, the west coast tribes formed the West Coast Allied Tribes, and on 14 August 1973 incorporated as a non-profit society called the West Coast District Society of Indian Chiefs. Six years later, they changed the name to Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) on April 2, 1979.

Today, each Nuu-chah-nulth First Nation includes several chiefly families, and most includes what were once considered several separate local groups. The 14 official Nuu-chah-nulth Bands are divided into three geographical regions:

Sothorn Region: Ditidaht, Huu-ay-aht, Hupacasath, Tseshah, and Uchucklesaht

Central Region: Ahousaht, Hesquiaht, Tla-o-qui-aht, Toquaht, and Ucluelet

Northern Region: Ehattesaht, Kyuquot/ Cheklesahht, Mowachat/ Muchalaht, and Nuchatlaht

seem consistent throughout the Nuu-chah-nulth regions. Variant versions and readings may also prove a sign of continuing cultural sovereignty (Gross 2003:128). In maintaining control of their culture and traditions, new myths and new presentations of old myths were needed to deal with on-going changes. However, the variations do not take away anything from the principle truths conveyed. Nonetheless, the overall condition of these stories cannot be found in word-for-word authenticity but in the commonality of themes conveyed.

### 3.4 How Son of Raven Captured the Day

The main story selected for this study, *How Son of Raven Captured the Day*, came from the Atleo family<sup>9</sup> of Ahousaht, an upper middle coastal village of Nuu-chah-nulth territory. The story was collected in the original language from the house of Margaret Atleo in 1972. Richard Atleo, who is a son of Margaret Atleo, a Ahousaht chief and elder, collected this story in public and family ceremonies, along with other stories over the years, as any Nuu-chah-nulth chief would, and published in *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (2004:6-10) .

Along with the principal story, three other similar stories are selected for the study, from different Pacific Northwest tribes: Tlingit, Haida, and Salish, for comparative analysis, given that these four stories share a similar culture background and are from the same general geographical area. They are, namely, '*Raven Steals the Light*' (Tlingit),<sup>10</sup> '*Raven Steals the Sun*' (Haida),<sup>11</sup> and '*How Raven Stole the Sun*' (Cowichan).<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Clan. From the lineage of Atleo

<sup>10</sup> Collected from 'Art of Alaska and the Pacific Northwest Coast.' Blaine Billman collected Pacific Northwest arts from Alaska through British Columbia and Washington State from homes to a unique Native Indian arts and stories, of the Haida and Tlingit, of the Kwakwaka'wakw, Salish, and Bella Coola. All are rich in native symbolism and spirit. <http://www.northwest-art.com/NorthwestArt/WebPages/StoriesRavenStealsTheLight.htm>

<sup>12</sup> Oracle ThnikQuest Educational Foundation -- <http://library.thinkquest.org/03oct/01010/raven.html>

<sup>12</sup> Legend from Ella E. Clark, *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1953.

The elaborated nature of the main story may indicate that their cultural features have been incorporated and added as it was passed down. This may also mean that not only the main storyline is a valuable subject of narrative analysis, but also how the story was told, in a cultural way, has rich sources for their cultural understanding. Boas in his anthropological works discovered what was important to Indigenous people by listening and collecting their oral story (Thom 2003:3).

Conversely the concise nature of the Salish story and their geographical location (Cowichan) may bear cultural distance from the story. Salish and Coast Salish are connected to the interior Indigenous groups of the mainland of British Columbia.

#### The Principal Story (os.2): *How Son of Raven Captured the Day*<sup>13</sup>

They had no light in the beginning. Son of Raven suggested that they try to capture the day. Across the waters a Chief owned the light of the day, which he kept carefully guarded in a box. The people who lived in darkness grew tired of this and wondered what to do.

‘How can we do that?’ he was asked.

‘We will entertain the Chief with a dance. Son of Deer, who can not only run fast but also leap far, will dance. If we are to capture the day, Deer must dance as one who is inspired, as one who captivates an audience.’

‘And then what will happen?’ they asked Son of Raven.

‘Deer will have soft dry cedar bark tied behind him. When no one seems to expect it, he will dance close to the Day Box and dip this bark into the fire.’

‘Yes, that’s a good idea!’ they said.

All was now prepared. Every exacting of ritual, ceremony, and practice had been observed. Son of Deer was dressed in his finest dancing costume, and the soft dry cedar bark was now carefully tied behind him. When they reached the other side, the dancing began.

The Chief and his people watched. At first there was little evident interest in the dancing. This is usual. Highly accomplished people are not easily impressed. But gradually Son of Deer’s dancing began to take hold of his audience. He danced with inspiration fuelled by the desire to fulfil a great need. He danced tirelessly, effortlessly, drawing strength from all those who lived in darkness. Now he danced by the Day Box. Without missing a beat, he dipped the dry cedar bark into the Day Box. Instantly it caught fire and Son of Deer sprang for the door. But the Chief and the people were quicker. Before Son of Deer could leap out of reach, the fire was snuffed out. Now the Chief and his people knew that Son of Raven wanted the daylight. From now on the Day Box would be more closely guarded.

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<sup>13</sup> From Tsawalk: *A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (Atleo 2004:6-10).

The people lived in darkness regrouped.

‘Go and get Wren, the wise one,’ Son of Raven said.

When Wren arrived, he offered the following advice: ‘The Chief has two beautiful daughters and the sockeye salmon are running now. Women will be cleaning and preparing fish. Turn yourselves into sockeye and swim to the other shore. When you are captured you will then have opportunity to kidnap the Chief’s daughters.’

So, everyone transformed into sockeye, except Son of Raven, who would be satisfied nothing less than taking the form of a giant king salmon. When the people of the day saw the huge king salmon they asked, ‘Is it not Son of Raven? Yes, it must be who wishes to take the day from us.’ When Wren subsequently advised a transformation into salmonberry shoots, which were also then in season, Son of Raven again foiled the plan with egotistical one-upmanship by transforming into a giant salmonberry shoot.

However, Wren is not named ‘he who always speaks rightly’ without good reason. Rather than rejecting or chastising Son of Raven for his blunders, Wren devised a plan that would take advantage of Son of Raven’s great desire to do great deeds. This new plan required that Son of Raven transform into a tiny leaf that would float in the Chief’s well. When the Chief’s daughter came for a drink, Son of Raven would manoeuvre himself in such a way that she would be made to swallow him.

So, it happened that Son of Raven became a tiny leaf floating in the Chief’s well. When the Chief’s daughter came for a drink, she dipped her cup into the well. As she lifted her cup to drink, she blew the tiny leaves away from her side of the cup. She drank deeply. One tiny leaf drifted toward her mouth. Before she could stop, she had swallowed it.

‘Oh well, it’s only a tiny leaf,’ she thought.

But not long after this, the daughter became pregnant. She wondered how it could have happened, for she had no husband. In due time she bore a son. It was a cry-baby. It cried so much that the mother and her relatives were all suspicious.

‘Is it not Son of Raven?’ the old people asked. ‘It seems to cry too much to be one of us.’

But what if they were mistaken? What if the baby really belonged to the Chief’s daughter? They could not be sure. So, the baby was accepted.

As the baby grew, it continued to cry and whine a lot. When the baby was old enough, he loved to play in the canoes. All day he would play in these canoes. He also knew about the paddle of great power owned by his mother. With one stroke the paddle could propel any canoe a great distance. The boy began to whine for this paddle. He whined and whined. Finally, his mother relented. Still the mother was careful. The boy could play with the paddle, but the canoe must be tied to the shore. Again, the boy whined and wheedled until he was allowed to paddle freely about. The boy was carefully watched, but nothing unusual happened. Gradually, the family began to trust him. Wasn’t he just a boy who liked to play like other boys?

One day the boy began to play with the Day Box that sat in its usual well-guarded place. He wanted the Day Box to play with in his canoe, he said. The chief would not hear of it. No, the boy must not play with the Day Box in his canoe. The boy pleaded. He cried. Over and over he wailed, ‘I want to play with the Day Box in my canoe! I want to play with the Day Box in my canoe!’ He got on everyone’s nerves. Day after day it was the same thing. ‘I want

to play with the Day Box in my canoe!’ Finally, the grandmother, in exasperation, told the boy’s mother, ‘You never have mercy on him. Let him play with the Day Box in his canoe.’

With the Day Box in his canoe, the boy was especially careful since he was closely watched. However, the boy did nothing unusual. He appeared content and happy simply to have the Day Box in his canoe while he played. Grandmother was happy. Mother was happy. The incessant crying and whining had stopped.

Meanwhile, among those who lived in darkness, Wren had sent some mice on an important mission across the waters to the shores of the Chief who owned the light of day. During the night the mice ate holes in all of the canoes except the one belonging to the boy. The next morning the boy began to play with the Day Box again. He was being watched but not closely anymore. Then, all of sudden, the boy gave a might thrust of his mother’s paddle. Swiftly his canoe raced over the water toward the other shore. The Chief and his people panicked. They scrambled for their canoes. One by one, as their canoes were launched into the deep, they sank. The mice had done a good job.

As the boy neared the other shore, he began to uncover the Day Box very slowly. Now for the first time, the people of darkness experienced the daylight. They looked and saw that it was Son of Raven who was coming to bring them the light. It grew brighter and brighter until the fullness of day was upon them (Atleo 2004:6-10).

### **3.4.1 Comparative Approach**

Comparison of shared myths from different Pacific Northwest cultures was an attempt to identify shared themes and to isolate the elemental features of the earliest forms of the myth. Moreover, the comparative analysis of shared myth showed how the cultural characteristics of each cultural group are added to this myth (Littleton 1973:32).

The attempt to approach the myth comparatively was popular among the scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Many scholars thought that all myths evolved from one myth (Boas 1916:872; Leonard 2008:Part1). They believed that, through linguistic approaches, they found strikingly similar terms with common concepts that were in cultures and religions. Some scholars thought that they found similar actors and story lines through structural studies in mythology (Levi-Strauss 1963:31). In addition, other scholars approached the study of mythology through psychological, comparative history, phylogenetic, and so on.

The following table shows the shared features of the myths:

| Story Title                 | Son of Raven Captured the Day (os.2)  | Raven Steals the Light (os.4)   | Raven Steals the Sun (os.5)   | How Raven Stole the Sun (os.6)   |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|--|
| Origin                      | Nuu-chah-nulth (Ahousaht)   | Tlingit (Alaska)  | Haida (Queen Charlotte)   | Salish (Cowichan)  |
| <b>No light and a deity</b> | <p><b>They had no light in the beginning.</b> Across the waters a Chief owned the light of the day, which he kept care-fully guarded in a box. The people who lived in dark-ness grew tired of this and wondered what to do. "How can we do that?" he was asked.</p>                                      | <p>There was a time many years ago when the earth was covered in darkness. <b>An inky pitch blanketed</b> the world making it very difficult for anyone to hunt or fish or gather berries for food. An old man lived <b>along the banks of a stream</b> with his daughter who may have been very beautiful or possibly quite homely.</p> <p>This didn't matter to the old man however because after all it was dark and who could tell.</p> | <p>Long ago, near the beginning of the world, Grey Eagle was the guardian of the Sun, Moon and Stars, of fresh water, and of fire. Grey Eagle hated people so much that he kept these things hidden. <b>People lived in darkness</b>, without fire and without fresh water.</p> | <p>Once upon a time, <b>a mean old chief hoarded the only light in the world.</b> He did not want to share it.</p> |
| <b>Son of Raven</b>         | <p><b>Son of Raven suggested that they try to capture the day.</b> Across the waters a Chief owned the light of the day, which he kept carefully guarded in a box. The people who lived in darkness grew tired of this and wondered what to do.</p> <p>"How can we do that?" he was asked. (abridged)</p> | <p><b>The mischievous Raven existed at that time because he always had.</b> He was none too happy about the state of the world for he blundered about in the dark bumping into every-thing. His interfering nature peaked one day when he stumbled by the old man's hut and overheard him muttering about his boxes. He instantly decided to steal the light but first had to find a way to get inside the hut.</p>                         | <b>Raven implied</b>  | <p><b>Raven decided that he could no longer tolerate this after growing tired of flying in the dark.</b></p>       |
| <b>Son of Deer dances</b>   | <p>"We will entertain the Chief with a dance. <b>Son of Deer</b>, who can not only run fast but also leap far, will dance.</p>  |   |   |  |

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|  | <p>...But the Chief and the people were quicker. Before Son of Deer could leap out of reach, the fire was snuffed out. Now the Chief and his people knew that Son of Raven wanted the daylight. From now on the Day Box would be more closely guarded.<br/>(Abridged - Tseshah Insert)</p>   |  |  |   |
| <p><b>Metamorphosis of Raven transforms into a tiny leaf.</b></p> <p><b>Wren (the Wise one) introduced</b></p> | <p><b>“Go and get Wren, the wise one,” Son of Raven said.</b></p> <p>When Wren arrived, he offered the following advice: “The Chief has two beautiful daughters and the sockeye salmon are running now. Women will be cleaning and preparing fish. <b>Turn yourselves into sockeye and swim to the other shore.</b> When you are captured you will then have opportunity to kidnap the Chief’s daughters.”</p> <p>So, everyone trans-formed into sockeye, except Son of Raven, who would be satisfied nothing less than taking the form of a giant king salmon. When the people of the day saw the huge king salmon they asked, “Is it not</p> | <p>Each day the young girl would go to the stream to fetch water, so the Raven transformed himself into a tiny hemlock needle and floated into the girl’s bucket. <b>Working a bit of his "trickster" magic, he made the girl thirsty and as she took a drink he slipped down her throat.</b> Once down in her warm insides he changed again; this time into a small human being and took a very long nap.</p> | <p>Gray Eagle had a beautiful daughter, and Raven fell in love with her. In the beginning, <b>Raven was a snow-white bird, and as a such, he pleased Gray Eagle’s daughter.</b> She invited him to her father’s longhouse.</p> <p>When Raven saw the Sun, Moon and stars, and fresh water hanging on the sides of Eagle’s lodge, he knew what he should do. He watched for his chance to seize them when no one was looking. He stole all of them, and a brand of fire also, and flew out of the longhouse through the smoke hole. As soon as Raven got outside he hung the Sun up in the sky. It made so much light that he was able to fly far out to an island in the middle of the ocean. When the Sun set, he fastened the Moon up in the sky and hung the stars around in different places. By this new light he kept on flying,</p> | <p><b>He turned himself into a cedar leaf and fell into the chief’s dwelling.</b> Raven, as the cedar leaf, fluttered into a drink that the chief’s daughter was drinking. She unwittingly swallowed raven down with a gulp of her drink.</p> |

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|   | Son of Raven?<br>Yes, it must be who wishes to take the day from us.” (abridged)  |   | carrying with him the fresh water and the brand of fire he had stolen. |   |
| <b>Raven as a Child</b><br><br><b>Crying Baby is born.</b>        | But not long after this, the daughter became pregnant. She wondered how it could have happened, for she had no husband. <b>In due time she bore a son.</b> It was a cry baby. It cried so much that the mother and her relatives were all suspicious.   | The girl did not know what was happening to her and didn't tell her father. One day the <b>Raven emerged as a little boy child.</b> If anyone could have seen him in the dark, they would have noticed that he was a peculiar looking child with a long beaklike nose, a few feathers here and there, and the un-mistakably shining eyes of the Raven.  |  | She immediately be-came pregnant and gave birth. <b>Her baby had hair as black as a raven's, dark glowing eyes, and an awfully short temper.</b> If the baby was bored, it would shriek. The chief ordered that the baby was to receive anything it wanted. One gift the baby got was a bag of shining stars. It liked the stars very much, until it accidentally threw them up through the smoke hole in the ceiling. The stars then scattered across the sky. |
| <b>Son of Raven as a child works his ways to bring the light.</b> | “Is it not Son of Raven?” the old people asked. “It seems to be one of us.”<br><br>But what if they were mistaken? What if the baby really belonged to the Chief's daughter? They could not be sure. So, the baby was accepted.<br>As the baby grew, it <b>continued to cry and whine</b> a lot. When the baby was old enough, he loved to play in <b>the canoes</b> . All day he would play in these canoes. He also knew about <b>the paddle of great power</b> owned by his mother. With one | Both father and daughter were delighted with their new addition and played with him for hours on end. As the child explored his new surroundings, he soon determined that the light must be kept in <b>the big box</b> in the corner. When he first tried to open <b>the box</b> , his grandfather scolded him profusely which in turn started a <b>crying and squawking fit</b> the likes of which the old man had never seen.<br><br>As grandfathers have done since the beginning of time he caved in and gave the child the biggest box to play with. This brought peace to the hut for |  | The baby grew bored yet again. It gave out more <b>violent shrieks</b> . It finally received a <b>bag containing the Moon</b> and played with it happily. It remained pacified with <b>the Moon</b> until the Moon bounced out of the dwelling through <b>the smoke hole</b> .  |



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|   | <p>stroke the paddle could propel any canoe a great distance. The boy began to whine for this paddle. <b>He whined and whined.</b> Finally, his mother relented. Still the mother was careful. The boy could play with <b>the paddle</b>, but the canoe must be tied to the shore. Again, the boy whined and wheedled until he was allowed to paddle freely about. The boy was carefully watched, but nothing unusual happened. Gradually, the family began to trust him. Wasn't he just a boy who liked to play like other boys?</p> | <p>a brief time, but it wasn't long until the child pulled his scam again, and again, and again until finally only one <b>box</b> remained.</p>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Finally, Son of Raven gets the light.</b></p> | <p>One day the boy began to play with <b>the Day Box</b> that sat in its usual well-guarded place. He wanted <b>the Day Box</b> to play with in his canoe, he said.</p> <p>...They looked and saw that it was Son of Raven who was coming to bring them the light. It grew brighter and brighter until the fullness of day was upon them.</p> <p>Today, when the tide is out, you may notice that Son of Raven is the first to enjoy any food that is found at water's edge. That is his</p>  | <p>After much coaxing and wailing the old man at last agreed to let the child play with the light for only a moment. As he tossed <b>the ball of light</b> the child transformed into the Raven and snatching the light in his beak, flew through the smoke hole and up into the sky.</p> <p>The world was instantly changed forever. Mountains sprang into the bright sky and reflections danced on the rivers and oceans. Far away, the Eagle was awakened and launched skyward - his target now clearly in sight.</p> | <p>He flew back over the land. When he had reached the right place, he dropped all the water he had stolen. It fell to the ground and there became the source of all the fresh-water streams and lakes in the world. Then Raven flew on, holding the brand of fire in his bill. The smoke from the fire blew back over his white feathers and made them black. When his bill began to burn, he had to drop the firebrand. It struck rocks and hid itself within them. That is why, if you strike two stones together, sparks of fire will</p> | <p>The baby was angrier than it had ever been. Everyone searched desperately for anything to occupy the screaming child. All the gifts it received were rejected, as it pointed to the bag with the sun in it. The household finally gave the baby what it wanted but did it reluctantly. But instead of opening the bag, the baby turned back into Raven, who flew through the smoke hole with the bag of light in his beak. This was how Raven stole the Sun. Raven spread the light of the Sun throughout the</p> |

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|  | <p>right and privilege, recognized by all Nuu-chah-nulth.</p> | <p>Raven was so caught up in all the excitement of the newly revealed world that he nearly didn't see the Eagle bearing down on him. Swerving sharply to escape the outstretched talons, he dropped nearly half of the ball of light, which fell to the earth. Shattering into one large and many small pieces on the rocky ground the bits of light bounced back up into the heavens where they remain to this day as the moon and the stars.</p> <p>The Eagle pursued Raven beyond the rim of the world and exhausted by the long chase, Raven let go of what light still remained. Floating gracefully above the clouds, the sun as we now know it started up over the mountains to the east.</p> <p>The first rays of the morning sun brought light through the smoke hole of the old man's house. He was weeping in sorrow over his great loss and looking up, saw his daughter for the first time. She was very beautiful and smiling, he began to feel a little better.</p> | <p>drop out.</p> <p>Raven's feathers never became white again after they were blackened by the smoke from the firebrand. That is why Raven is now a black bird.</p> <p>(Ravens symbolize many things in different cultures. Indigenous tradition honours the raven as a symbol of courage and of magical guidance. The Arab culture calls the raven Abu Zajir which means "Father of Omens." They are seen as oracular birds, used in divination. They are seen as symbols of death, life, the sun, magic, shape shifting, and tricksters.)</p> | <p>world.</p> |
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**Table 2: Synoptic Analysis of Origin myths**

### **3.4.2 They had no Light**

Darkness (*tum*) prevailed the pre-created world. All four creation stories implied the absence of light was the condition of the pre-created universe. The story also indicated that the situation of the universe without light was not desirable.

The Chief who owned the light was disinclined to offer it to people. That the people in darkness wanted to get the light created the common tension in these stories. The Tlingit story told that ‘hunting, fishing and gathering berries,’ their livelihoods were in jeopardy. The Haida story told that the Grey Eagle was ‘malevolent’ toward people, not sharing light, fire, and freshwater. The Salish described the old Chief, the owner of light, as a ‘mean character.’ The Tseshaht story told that the Wolf people had fire and they were the most dreaded people in all the land (Clutesi 1967:17). The Nuuchahnulth understood the essential idea of the creation was bringing light to their dark world.

#### ***3.4.2.1 Metaphysical Meaning***

Darkness was a theme that frequently appeared in creation stories and often described the condition before the creation of the world. The theme of darkness in the Nuuchahnulth creation story immediately brought two questions: First, it raised a question whether the analogy came from the influence of the Christian story since, at the first hand, there was a notable similarity with the Hebrew creation story in the OT scripture. Second, the metaphoric theme of darkness and light appeared in many world religions, especially in Christianity. In religions, the theme of darkness or light was the foundational base for moral concepts. Darkness and light often were used in the sense of a metaphor or understood in a real sense as a datum of religious experience.

As well, about the appearance of the theme of darkness in the creation of the world, the first question to ask was whether darkness and light was metaphysical concept to the Nuuchahnulth. Hence, the study examined the language habits of the Nuuchahnulth to see the possibility of metaphysical meanings. The reason for this quest was to see

whether the concept of the spiritual world of Nuuchahnulth was of philosophical abstraction. This, in detail, determines how it differed from the scientific and dualistic concept of the physical and spiritual worlds of the West.

The *T'aat'aagsapa* word *tum* (darkness) had no known metaphysical meaning. The sample sentences, which were drawn from 'Text 51' in Sapir and Swadesh (1955) using 'Nootka Texts Database' built by Matthew Davidson, indicated that the Nuuchahnulth word darkness (*tum*) simply expressed the physical absence of light.

- (1) *hisi'kši'aλ tumaqλ'i.*

She went along that way in the dark.

- (2) *wik'ał'aλ ki'ki'x'in'aqsup'i ?ani ya'akh'aλqa huya'łqa ?ani tumaqλqa ?ah hiłst'u'i.*

The Kuhn women did not notice it, for they were dancing, and it was dark along the wall.

- (3) *ku'ał tumapapikin lihšiλ wa'min tapatšiλ.*

We had thought it over and said, 'We will set out in the morning when it is still dark.

- (4) *hitaqsi'aλin ku'ał tutumuk ?i'qhi'.*

We embarked in the morning while it was still dark all over.

- (5) *twpšiλši'aλ tumaqstu'as'aλ.*

It was turning evening; getting dark.

- (6) *twpši'aλ tutumačištu'aλ.*

It was evening, it became dark on the water.

- (7) *?ani ku'ałhqa kamitqšiλ tumapap kamitquk<sup>w</sup>aλ ?i'htu'p'i.*

In the morning, while it was still a bit dark, the whale started running again.

- (8) *tumapi ?i'qhi' λisa'aλ.*

It was still a bit dark as it dawned.

(9) *hiłweʔin tumaqłal ʔatɰiʔal.*

It was now dark night.

Looking at these sample sentences, Nuu-chah-nulth did not appear to use the word *tum* (darkness) as a metaphysical meaning but indicate that the word was used only as a physical absence of light. The absence of metaphysical abstraction did not point to the lack of sophisticated philosophical ideas. But it only pointed to the fact that they did not need to have abstraction because they perceived the universe as the space where the physical and spiritual intimately related. This view contrasts with the Christianity of the West where this idea was dictated by the scientific worldview.

Moreover, darkness was also one of the dominant themes in Christianity. External darkness was the place mentioned three times in the Gospel of Matthew (8:12; 22:13; 25:30) as a place of punishment or condemnation. The similar metaphysical meaning appeared in the OT scripture: 'Then Solomon said, The Lord has said that he would dwell in thick darkness' (1King 8: 12). The word also appeared to indicate the dire situation: 'I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them' (Isaiah 42: 16b).

Only in the sample sentence (10), based on Sapir's capitalization of the translated name, it was used as part of a name or proper noun indicating a place or object. Often the place names in Nuu-chah-nulth came from the shapes and colours of the landscape. For example, the name, 'Nuu-chah-nulth,' meant peoples alongside the mountains. The mountainous divide between the Pacific Ocean and the rest of the island was emphasized.

(10) *ʔuhqaʔ tuxč'inł ʔur<sup>w</sup>ił mamaqitqasapw·hč'a mama'siyak hiyaʔaqh tumaqł'a k<sup>w</sup>i'suwatuk ʔapʔaksutłi h<sup>w</sup>č'uqłis hiyaʔaqh.*

It was he who jumped into what they call the box-backed mud-shark at Dark-in-Rocks, opposite the mouth of Uchuckleshat Harbour.

It is critical to note that a non-canonical reading of the OT creation account also did not appear to use metaphysical meanings for light and darkness. Perhaps this evidence indicates the consistency in the evolutionary development of the human ideas throughout the world. Hence, the Nuu-chah-nulth creation story simply stated that people had a natural desire for light and a natural antipathy toward darkness: Before the light came about, nothing could have been seen. Only when the light came, the seen world began to exist.

#### ***3.4.2.2 Two Worlds***

However, the world where the Chief and his family lived was superior to the dark world. Almost all myths deal with the existence of two worlds before creation: sacred and profane. While traditional Indigenous religious beliefs do not accept the Cartesian duality, there was a clear distinction between the two worlds. However, this difference should be understood in two different dimensions, not as two fundamentally segregated spaces. The visit and communication were possible through some effort in the origin story. This difference should also give us a significant understanding about their view of the space.

#### **Worldviews**

Charles Kraft stated that a worldview was the culturally structured assumptions, values, and commitment underlying a people's perception of reality...a society structures such things as what its people were to believe, how they are to picture reality, and how and what they were to analyse. People interpret and react on this basis reflexively without thinking (Kraft 2005:20). Our worldview formed our values, gave order and meaning to life, provided a paradigm of the world, and guided us in the way that we should function in it. It informed how the world operated. It is the foundation of our culture, religion, language, family life, art, and education. Worldviews are the 'universe' of people. As a worldview is so essential to an individual or a society, any unfamiliar view is resisted unconsciously. Paul Hiebert writes: 'The worldview incorporates assumptions about the

‘givens’ of reality. Challenges to these assumptions threaten the very foundations of their world. People resist such challenges with deep emotion, for such questions threaten to destroy their understanding of identity’ (Hiebert 1994:38).

### **Structure of the Universe**

A contrast was made to explain the differences between the Western worldview and the non-Western worldview, although these differentiations were based in the Western categories. The early incorporation of the Platonic body-soul distinction into Christian theology laid the foundation of a pervasive dualism of within Western thought. The result was a mechanistic view of a closed universe, which supposedly could be explained by science, with no room left for the supernatural. This perceived the world in the dichotomy of body and soul, spirit and matter, and sacred and profane (Escobar & Shenk 2007:439). Non-Western cultures have a more super-naturalistic and more holistic view of the universe. It has an upper realm of high religion and a lower realm of science, like the modern Western view of reality. But the distinctive category of the non-Western worldview is right below the upper realm of religion and there is the realm of low religion which relates to the physical realm. The physical world is not merely controlled mechanically by impersonal forces and physical laws, but it is rather a relational world in which interacts not only with humans, but also with animals, plants, and inanimate objects that are often thought to have personalities and wills.

The universe the Nuuchahnulth perceived was found in the worldview presented in their origin myths. Their origin myths suggested that two worlds exist. The two worlds were a world with light and a world without the light. One realm, possibly of high religion, was the family of the Chief who owned the Day box that contained the light. The other realm represented the community of animated personalities. The world without the light wanted the light. The two realms interact freely. The third realm, if it exists, was not presented in the origin story. It was problematic to fit the structure of the origin myth into the three-tiers, three realms of the non-Western category. But the structure in the origin

myth focussed more on the aggregation of the two worlds. This story introduces these two worlds just as you would expect without much explanation. The Nuu-chah-nulth envisioned the world where the spiritual and the physical are connected.

#### ***3.4.2.3 Creation as an Ontological State***

Exposure to light fundamentally changed people's ontological status. The story of *How the Son of Raven Captured the Day* told how they stole the light from its master, but the intent of the story was to create/become a world with the light. The story was not about getting the physical elements but about ontological status (3.4).

As all aspects of their lives were in intimate contact with nature, the Nuu-chah-nulths sought to find God in the providence of nature which helped life. They believed that the providence of nature that was inconceivable to them had to come from God. It was the Judeo-Christian understanding that God created the physical universe. The condition of the pre-created universe was described, 'Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' (Genesis 1.2). A similar description was found in the origin myths (3.4.2). The Nuu-chah-nulths understood the state of which the absence of God created was adversarial for the people. '*There was no light in the beginning*' summarized that condition. Traditional Indigenous religions did not have the premise of a Cartesian duality, but the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview accepted the existence of a spiritual world and a physical world which were closely knit together. This aspect practically manifested in all facet of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture.

The origin myths described the physical distance between the two worlds as 'across the water' (3.4) or 'along the banks of the river' (3.4.1).<sup>14</sup> The spiritual world was accessible with little effort from the physical. As an apt description of the Nuu-chah-

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<sup>14</sup> Tlingit version of the story.



nulth way of thinking, there was no dichotomy of the natural and supernatural. Spirits were as real in everyday experience as natural things. Explanations across the natural and the supernatural were freely interchanged in rationalizing daily occurrences. This blending of the natural and supernatural realms was called the indigenous supernatural orientation, but the natural and supernatural dichotomy was a non-Indigenous construct (Hiebert 1990:286-289).

### 3.4.3 'In the Beginning': Borrowed Expression

All the stories began with a time reference to a beginning, in one form or another, which alluded a suspicion of a western form. 'In the beginning' was a narrative form used in the Western style of storytelling. This phrase was used to set up the chronology of the story as in linear concept of time. In the creation story of the OT (Gen. 1:1), the phrase signifies the beginning of the cosmos. The gospel of John used the Greek word *Ἐν ἀρχῇ* (In the beginning) translated to 'origin, beginning, or the first of things.' The use of the phrase rendered a notion of influence.

The language habit of the Nuuchah-nulth showed a clear evidence for Western influence. The Nuuchah-nulth word 'begin' (*-čiči/-šiči*) exists only as an aspectual suffix that denoted 'beginning of actions'. To say *tux* (to jump) was denoted *tuuxtuuxšiči* means 'starting to jump' in the Ahousaht dialect. The following sentences were drawn from Sapir's Text 51 (Sapir & Swadesh 1939).

(11) *pe?imqha?al žimtžimtšiči?alqu? žuyi čiči?aluk nasqyak na'sqičiči?al.*

As soon as the words begin, they begin beating very rapidly.

(12) *ne?ičiči?alšiči?al ku?ičiči?al.*

The morning light was beginning to grow.

(13) *ne?ičiči?alhička?asqo? hawe? ?ah?a'.*

It seems you are beginning to hear, O Chief.

There was neither a self-standing word for beginning in the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language, nor any specific *T'aat'aaqsapa* word matching the meaning of the English word 'beginning' found in Sapir's texts. Therefore, the word 'in the beginning' was not originally found in their language or concept, but it was added to reflect the appearance of the indigenous literature changed by the influence of Westernization, and the form of the English story telling.

The influence of the Western literature was not limited to literary forms but seemed have altered the way the Indigenous oral stories were told. The Indigenous scholar Leanne Simpson alleged that Richard Atleo, the storyteller, used the expression as a deliberate attempt to parallel their myth with the Christian story. She observed:

Atleo makes linkages between Nuu-chah-nulth ontology, Western science, and postmodernism. As an Indigenous scholar, this is the least interesting part of the book to me. Nuu-chah-nulth knowledge, philosophies, and intellectual traditions are complex, valid, and relevant in their own right, regardless of whether they have any similarities or relevancies to Western intellectual traditions, nor can 'more important' components be drawn out of an Indigenous worldview simply because they complement Western knowledge (Simpson 2006).

Atleo attempted to relate Son of Raven, culture hero, to Jesus in his book.<sup>15</sup> Simpson found that the attempt to tell Indigenous story in parallel to the Western story 'distasteful.'

Western Christian influence began as much of Nuu-chah-nulth culture came under intense cultural pressure in the late nineteenth century. This was the period of reserve allocations, the imposition of federal government authority, and outbreaks of disease. At the same period, the first sustained mission among the Nuu-chah-nulth has established the mission among the Hesquiaht in 1875 (Brabant 1900; Moser 1926:121). Roman Catholic missions and churches were also established among most villages of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribe (Moser 1926:151-153, 158-159). The evidence of their extended contact with Christianity, at least for two centuries, suggests not only that there was very credible

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<sup>15</sup> Richard Atleo, *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview* (2005).

evidence of Christian influence on their oral traditions, but also, they have not rejected the Christian creation story.

Similarly, the same expression ‘In the beginning’ was used in the English version of both the Haida and Salish stories. The Haida story begins with the phrase ‘Long ago’ and the Salish story ‘Once upon a time’ respectively.<sup>16</sup> The fixated notion that Westernization equalled the civilization had long been the habit of colonial thinking. It is critical to memo that the Western influence on the Indigenous creation stories was indicative of the wide acceptance of the biblical creation story among the tribes in the Northwest Canada and USA.

#### ***3.4.3.1 Nuu-chah-nulth Concept of Time***

The absence of the word ‘beginning’ in the Nuu-chah-nulth language suggested that there was a conceptual disparity of time between Western and Indigenous cultures. The Indigenous concept of time differs in many ways from the Western concept of time. The temporal concept possessed by Indigenous cultures was affecting the whole aspects of their cultural thinking, and since the concept of time was an essential component for understanding of their worldview, an extended discussion was required in this section.

The Indigenous orientation of time was much different from the modern concept of time. The Nuu-chah-nulth story started without a time reference almost in all cases. ‘This is how it came about’ is already implied in the stories. It also suggested that this was what happened at the beginning of existence. The story headings in Sapir’s collections which resulted from direct translation, started with, ‘Raven wanted to have Skate and himself throw spears at each other’ (1939:28), ‘The chief of the Wolves possessed land which he used for have codfish heads drift on to the beach, so that he might have something to eat’ (1939:33), or, ‘The woman was working, she was making canoe hats’ (1939:45). In all

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<sup>16</sup> See Table1.

of these cases, the story heading started with the basic stage of the plot and time references are not given. The phrase 'in the beginning' did not appear in the Tseshaht collections either (Clutesi 1967).

The general time concept of Indigenous peoples was different from the scientific time concept of the West. The Western concept of time was linear which had the beginning and end. It was also continuously measured. But there was no specific term equivalent to the English word 'time' in almost all Indigenous languages (Malan & McCone 1960:12-13). The Indigenous concepts of time were not units of time measurement. Nilsson called the Indigenous concept of time 'discontinuous time indications.' It was a tradition used to locate events in relation to other events (Nilsson 1920:356-7). There were examples of discontinuous time indications in the Nuuchah-nulth narratives, 'In the fall, in the salmon-cutting month' (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:109), 'When it is nearly time for the fish to come' (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:111), and 'When one is about to train for sea lions' (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:113). Indigenous storytelling did not care about the temporal distance between events, so it did not list the events in the story in order. Older events might be described as just happened, and events that just happened could give reasons for events happened long ago.

The scientific and linear time concept had less bearing on the memory mechanism of the Nuuchah-nulth people since they remembered things by events such as 'when Charles celebrated his first ocean boat' or 'when Gina left for the city.' How many years, days, or any specific period of time had only a little concern for them as if they lived in a timeless eternity. Indigenous peoples had a cyclical approach compared to a linear approach, to time that affected their communal decision-making process as well (Redpath & Nielsen 1997:335).

Decision-making in Indigenous cultures evolved through a process of consultation and discussion, and decisions often take time to emerge as events and circumstances unfolded.

There was an element of timelessness in the process, but time was ‘always relative and always with us’ (Dumont 1993:52).

#### ***3.4.3.2 Space and Time***

The differences in time concept progressed to the spatial-concept-driven thinking. Indigenous cultural ideas were entirely focused on their surroundings, and their lives were lived responsibly within their places. Thus, Indigenous theologians may contribute to a theology of space through their writings on theological topics (Baker 2016: 234). Western theology often overlooked the subject of space, but Indigenous traditionalism was oriented toward a cosmic spatial paradigm. The cultural facts were related to the Christian theology of space. Tinker agreed with this idea and asserted that ‘without understanding the spatiality of Indigenous existence, one cannot understand Indigenous spiritual traditions’ (Tinker 1996: 121). Indigenous worldview gave shape by a spatial paradigm; because Indigenous traditionalism was influenced profoundly by its environment, Weaver also described the Indigenous worldview as ‘geo-mythological’ (Weaver 2015: 29). The connection between the Indigenous people and their environment was significant.

On the other hand, Western theology was focused on time, but Indigenous theology was rooted in solidarity and kinship with the environments. This orientation was shown in ethical decisions of Indigenous people made in connection with the creation and communal dynamic, spiritual practices drawn collectively with the community, and communal and individual identity were focused on their kinship with surroundings. Their identity came from their lands and connection with their relatives. ‘Without land, they are not people’ (Bear-Barnetson 2009: 55).

This cultural tendency of Indigenous people in regard to the view of time, they saw time as cyclical, causing them to be apathetic toward the past and future (Baker 2016:236). As well, the same tendency in light of the lack of concept of time persisted in Indigenous languages. Their time concept and language habits, however, did not affect their

philosophy of life, but rather it was the result of their lifestyle for many years. The idea of the kinship strengthened this fact: their view of kinship includes family and relatives and natural surroundings.

Moreover, the time and space dichotomy relate to the difference between Christian and Indigenous ethics. Christian theology had traditionally been concerned with time and history, to the exclusion of place and space. So, the Christian ethics derived from past commandments and resulted in future outcomes. Thus, communal and individual identity found in the idea of the Kingdom of God were to be consummated in the future. On the other hand, Indigenous ethics was from space of community and its communal dynamic. Indigenous Christians, thus, expressed their faith on a ‘metaphoric map,’ a map of sacred mountains, locations for vision quests, places where particular ritual or dance occurred, or so (Charleston 2015:17-18).

### **The Kingdom of God as Space**

In the theology based on the cultural understanding of Indigenous peoples, God’s created world was a space where God’s spirit indwelt. The fallenness of the created world posed difficulties to Indigenous theologies because of their strong belief about God’s presence in all creation. T.F. Torrance stated the same concern as he discussed on incarnation theology since ‘the created world was God-enclosed space where exists in relation to God’ (Torrance 1969:18). Hence, Christian idea of space must begin with God’s presence relative to and within creation (Bartholomew 2011:319). Tinker, in developing the spatial understanding of the Kingdom of God, noted that when Jesus stated that the kingdom not only ‘has come near (ἤγγικεν)’ which used a spatial reference meaning ‘is at hand’ (Matthew 3.2) but also is in their midst (Luke 17). Whether this was spatial or metaphysical meaning, Tinker saw these verses indicated that the Kingdom must in some way be present in every place. Thus, for Tinker, creation was the Kingdom of God (Baker 2016:238).

### 3.4.4 Light: Shared Theme of religion

In the creation stories, the light always was a prominent theme. Likewise, the theme of light was an essential topic in the study of religions. Many religions discussed experiences of light. While there were morphological similarities and differences of experiences among religions, the common factor of light in religion was that it ‘brings people out of the profane universe and project them into a universe different in quality, an entirely different world’ (Eliade 1971:2).

In the central creation story, the light was presented as an essence of the created world, telling its audience that a world with light was the created world.

Generally, having a natural desire for light shows the fundamental disposition about life. The general view of the light was related to life, knowledge, and wisdom, while darkness was related to death, ignorance, and evil. This, however, does not reflect on colour-symbolism since the primary meaning of light is the function of illumination, making things appear in the dark. The yearning for light, however, was an expression of exuberant celebration in all aspects of life to all. For Nuu-chah-nulth, their story seemed to indicate that to be revealed in light means to be created.

#### 3.4.4.1 *Light, Fire, the Day, and the Sun*

However, in the central story, the light was used synonymously with fire. As well, other featured stories used expressions such as the Day or the Sun. The linguistic evidence already suggested that the *T'aat'aaqsapa* word *n'aas* was used for the Day and light in Tseshaht dialect.

Although all creation stories shared the same goal: to obtain light, each used a different element relates to light in some, inconsistent, way. ‘The Day (*n'aas*)’ was used in the Ahousaht story, while the Tlingit version used ‘light (*hatlahak*)’, the Haida story ‘the Sun (*hup*)’ and ‘fire (*inqew*)’ indiscriminately, and the Salish story used ‘the light of the Sun.’ Suppose these elements meant the same thing to the Nuu-chah-nulth, the physical

substance of light had no physical bearing on how they relate to their deity and light. The stories wanted to focus on the illumination rather than the elements. The indiscriminate uses of light and fire in the main story established that Nuu-chah-nulth conception of God did not relate to a physical element, as did in some religious discussion.

Again, the study explored these words in Sapir's texts and the dictionary to look for a synonymous use between these words. The linguistic evidence from the grammatical use of these words in Sapir's texts and the following sample sentences showed that each of these words, light, fire, the sun and the Day, had a distinctive use, as demonstrated in the following sentences.

The Nuu-chah-nulth word *ʔink<sup>w</sup>* (*inqew*) was used in the exact way as the English word 'fire'. It had no integrated meaning with 'light' or 'the sun.'

(14) *mitx<sup>w</sup>i'čipaλ ʔinkʔi' huryaʔ.*

They circled round the fire dancing.

(15) *ʔuʔi'ʔamin hihik<sup>w</sup>aʔa ʔink<sup>w</sup>ačiλ.* (note: The phonological variations of *k* vs. *k<sup>w</sup>* vs. *k<sup>w</sup>* are determined by a following suffix.)

We landed at Overhanging-Rocks and lit a fire.

(16) *hiłhpaλniλa' ʔaḥpa' katsaλ ʔinkna'kšiλ.*

We stopped and made fire.

(17) *yaʔtweʔin muqimyasuk q<sup>w</sup>a' ʔink<sup>w</sup>asukqu.*

There on the ground was a round thing phosphorescent as though on fire.

(18) *ʔaḥ ʔuči'łḥpa'qλweʔincu' ʔink<sup>w</sup>ačiλ ʔanič maʔuk.*

You are to light fire with this because, as they say, it is cold.

(19) *ʔinkčisaλpa'qλaλweʔincu' wa'paλateʔicu' λi'šin ʔaḥku' ʔuči'łḥpa'qλweʔincu' ʔink<sup>w</sup>ačiλ wa'paλatni.*

Chief Louie says you are to sit by the fire on the beach: he says you are to use this to feed the fire.'

(20) *inkni'qsaḥapaλma nuptaqimł λuk<sup>w</sup>itaq ʔinksyi me'ḥʔis.*



Captain Jimmy then rolled down the beach a thick block of firewood.

- (21) *hiniʔas qʷayaçi:k ʔaλqimł hitinqsaλ ʔucaçiʔaλ hiʔsqin ʔinkʷis qʷayaçi:kminhʔi ʔaλqimł.*

Two wolves came outside and down the beach to our fire.

*Tʼaatʼaaqsapa Cultural Dictionary* (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991) rendered extra evidence in the use of these words. The most common *Tʼaatʼaaqsapa* word used for ‘light’ was *kaλʰhak* (*katlaʰhak*). But, the word *nʼaas* (day) was exclusively used for ‘light’ in the Tseshaht dialect. Also, in Mowachaht dialect, both *nʼaas* (day) and *kaλʰhak* (light) were used for light. Tseshaht’s exclusive use of the word *nʼaas* (day) for ‘light’ was significant because for the common Nuu-chah-nulth name for God was *Nʼaas* (day).

The Nuu-chah-nulth word *hup*<sup>17</sup> was used the same way as the English word ‘the sun’.

- (22) *yaqʷinλqin ʔaʼni sayačap hupał hitaquʷa ʰačapiʷa.*

That is why we really rounded the point at Haachapii’a while the sun was still high.

- (23) *hupʔataλ hupał ʔuyichə ʔanin sayačap hupał hitasaλ.*

The sun was setting although it had been high up at the time we landed.

- (24) *kamatapaλ hiʔsaʰkʷisačistwłʔitq hupałʔi tupatʔi ʔani hiʔsaʰkʷistwłqə yaʰ qʷiʔathʔitq.*

He knew when the sun rose out of the sea each time that it rose from (the direction of) their village.

- (25) *hixuqšiʔaλin ʔahʔaʰ ywʰqʷaʰ nuʔatapaλqin ʔuyi hitakʷistahsʔaλ hupałʔi ʔaλqimł.*

We gave a shout; we ended the song when the two suns came up out of the canoe.

- (26) *hupʔataλ hiʔsiʰʔataλ hihiʰʔihʔakʔi naʰsapułʔi hupałminhʔi.*

Then the suns set at the ends of the device.

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<sup>17</sup> The sun (roundish object, spherical or chunky object): *hup*.

In some incidences in Sapir's texts, the sun was personified as literary expressions in Nuu-chah-nulth narratives. But the sun was neither worshipped nor revered for the Nuu-chah-nulth people do not pray to the sun.

(27) *hupałʔi ʔu'całma ʔaḥ nu'kʔi*.

The song belongs to the sun.

(28) *ʔuyiʔuktuk<sup>w</sup>itweʔin q<sup>w</sup>iyi'č šiłsaʔat hupałḥʔat ʔaminkšił*.

He obtained it the time when the sun moved to land and met him.

The dual meaning of the word *n'aas* for 'light' and 'day' in the Tseshaht dialect pointed to the intention of the using the day (the Day) and light, in the story. The story at the end showed that light (*n'aas*) was inside the Day (*n'aas*) box. The deliberate telling of the story with 'the Day box' had an evocative purpose. The release of the light at the end of the story showed that the light not only illumine their world but also was the essence of the Creator, and everything in the created world was a fragment of the Creator. This idea resonated with the Nuu-chah-nulth principle of *Heshook-ish Tsawalk* (everything is one).

However, the stories were implicit about the nature of existence in the physical realm as well as the spiritual. The stories clearly indicated that these elements, fire, light and the sun, could only be obtained from the other world 'across the waters' or 'along the banks of the river.' The fact that the Nuu-chah-nulth storyteller and the audience had no difficulty shifting from capturing 'the light' to 'the fire' established two points: first, as far as the story was told, both the fire and the light were about illumination or brightness; and second, the primary emphasis of the story was about an ontological state rather than obtaining physical element. Eliade pointed that often in a spiritual discussion these words, light, the Sun, and fire are used synonymously as a symbolic meaning for inner luminosity or realization of the Self (Eliade 1971:3-4).

### 3.4.5 Community: Natural State

Another important topic of discussion in the chapter (or in the entire study) was the position of the community. The main origin myth implied that the community was a natural state. To understand the Nuu-chah-nulth community was the central theological undertaking of this study.

The worldview differed from culture to culture. Nevertheless, the condition of the pre-created world described in the OT was almost identical with the darkness described in the Nuu-chah-nulth story. But what was different was the presentation of God's image in each creation account. In the OT creation story, God himself created the world. He holds all that it takes for the creation of the universe: omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence. We imagined the creation scene which, out of God's powerful mouth, the forces of His words came out to create things, out of nothing. The Hebrew God whom Christianity relate to is the almighty God, *El Shaddai*. The Nuu-chah-nulth story told that it was not the Creator-Chief who created the world but from the desires and actions of the community. They decided the goals and engaged in the actions to create the world.

A similar structure was found in Greek mythology. *Theogony*, a famous version of Greek mythology, gives an account of the beginning of things. *Hesiod*, the author, begins with *Chaos*, a yawning nothingness. Out of the void emerged *Gaia* (the Earth) and some other primary divine beings: *Eros* (a god of love), the *Abyss* (the *Tartarus*), and the *Erebus*. Without male assistance, *Gaia* gave birth to *Uranus* (the Sky) who then fertilized her (Hesiod 1953:116-138). The Earth and the sophisticated genealogy of characters, gods, appear during the creation process of the world.

The storyteller and the audience, in no doubt, recognized the Chief as in the rank of Creator-deity. However, his image was portrayed as powerful as the Hebrew idea of God. The Chief in the story was the chief guardian of the Day (Light) box.

Others like Son of Raven, Wren, Deer, mice, as members of the community, brought out the heroic and collaborated effort to steal the Day (*n'ass*) Box from the Chief.

However, the story did not bother to tell the audience about the existence of the community. Brazouski and Klatt assert that Myths of origin or origin myths represent an attempt to render the universe comprehensible in cultural terms and explain the origin of the world (1994: 10). The community was a natural state whose existence was never questioned by the Nuu-chah-nulth. This aspect of the story suggests that the community holds vital importance in every affair of the Nuu-chah-nulth life. They understood the world through the community. This aspect of the community was essential for the Nuu-chah-nulth understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth Christology.

The canonical doctrine of Christology recognized the innate presence of Christ in creation. In parallel, the Nuu-chah-nulth idea of the created naturally assumed the existence of the community in creation. Accepted, the Nuu-chah-nulth Christians who acknowledge Christ as the central figure in creation also can understand that the mysterious presence of Christ is living in their community.

Nevertheless, the problem of other beings in the story still presented a logical flaw to modern readers: How could physical beings exist before the world was created? There were two feasible explanations. First, the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of time, non-sequential, could explain the flaw in the story and was implicated in the confusion of the sequential events of the creation. Second, the dichotomy of two worlds, the physical and spiritual, did not exist in the frame of the Nuu-chah-nulth thought and there was no plausible way to tell this story without the partitions about two worlds.

#### **3.4.6 Chief, Creator, and God**

The study established several facts about the Nuu-chah-nulth conception of God: The study saw that a connection to a physical element was not considered as a deity, and hence, God was not animistic; The exterior image of the God (Chief) portrayed was not all-powerful compared to the Hebrew God in the OT.

The term animism came from the Latin word *anima* (breath, spirit, life). It is the religious belief that objects, places and creatures all possess a distinct spiritual essence. In the past, animism was used in the anthropology of religion as incorrectly termed for the belief system of many indigenous peoples (Stringer 1999: 542-56).

The Nuu-chah-nulth, instead, perceived God from a character existed in familial place in the living environment. They imagined God to be the One who was at the very beginning of their ancestral lineage. They called him ‘the Chief in the Sky (*Ha’wilt N’aas*).’ Although their idea of the deity came from a relationship to their ancestors, he was not a specific figure in history, but a divine being of a philosophical concept.

#### ***3.4.6.1 Name for God***

Each selected origin story symbolically presented a powerful being as a ‘Chief,’ ‘an old man,’ ‘Grey Eagle,’ or ‘a mean old chief.’ In the society where a functional family (clan) hierarch provide the basic structure, these characterizations of the Chief points back to their ancestral origin, such as, in their frequent expression of ‘great-great-grandfather’<sup>18</sup> who go back to the infinite time past, is wise (Grey), sacred (mean) and spiritual (Eagle). These characters are described to exist in the spiritual side of the cosmos. This may suggest that the Nuu-chah-nulth, along with other people in Northwest, widely believed that there was a powerful being in the bright side of the cosmos and that the bright side of the universe has what the dark side desired for light.

The story implies the existence of the two sides although the Nuu-chah-nulth culture does not compartmentalize them as in Enlightenment thinking. The modern Nuu-chah-nulths use the word *N’aas* (Day) for the English word God. The name of the creator in the Tsshaht story creation, which Boas collected, uses a concept of God more developed toward the Christian concept, *Ha’wilt N’aas* (Day Chief). In the story, *Ha’wilt N’aas*

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<sup>18</sup> Often, great-great-grandfather is referred to them as God.

(Day Chief) created the first woman and man. Christian influence on the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of God is evident. But God for the Nuu-chah-nulth people was understood in Light.

(29) *si'cuwats **n̓a's** ?u?uyaqhah siya.*

I sang, 'Day is on my side.'

*N'aas* (Day) was now culturally appropriated and generally considered as the equal meaning of (Christian) God. The Nuu-chah-nulths address to *N'aas* in their (Christian) prayers.<sup>19</sup> Also, they use *N'aas* and God interchangeably. The use of the word *N'aas* in their religion started as they formed an understanding of the western religious idea. They traditionally invoked 'Great-great Grandfather,' unknown 'Great Chief in the sky,' or 'Great spirit' in their prayers. They often describe that the source of wisdom and strengths came from the farthest linages of the family, like the 'great-great-great-grandfather.'

(30) ***n̓a's**atayakuk<sup>w</sup>ah ?ahkur yaqšišiλqas hi'tatukšišiλ wa'ʔaλma ciqšišiλ kica'hin.*

This one that I have invoked is (to) Day.

Again, the Tsshaht origin story described that *N'aas* created the first two people, which provided the basis for consideration of *N'aas* as their name for God. The story postulated cultural connections and associations to the physical and spiritual worlds. The story specified the creation of the first woman and man for *Ts'ishaa* (Tsshaht) people. All Tsshaht people believed that they were direct descendants of the first man and woman, *Naasayilhim* (Sky-Day) and *Naasiya atu* (Day-Down).<sup>20</sup> These names did not appear to be personal names but seemed to refer to 'morning' and 'night' or 'sunrise' and 'sunset.'

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<sup>19</sup> During the years I served in Christian mission with the people, I often heard them use *N'aas* interchangeably with God.

<sup>20</sup> Almost all Nuu-chah-nulth people agree with this. All Nuu-chah-nulth people call God (the Creator) *N'aas*.

The translated meaning of *Naasayilhim* Sky-Day suggested the position of the light in the sky, and *Naasiya atu* Day-Down appeared to indicate that light is down. The Day Chief (*Ha'wilth N'aas*) simply meant the chief in the sky (Coté 2010; Sapir & Swadesh 1955; Golla 2000).

The anthropologist Susan Golla conducted fieldwork in re-translating Sapir's *Nootka Texts* with elders in the Tseshaht and Huupachasaht reserves. One of her findings was that *Kapkimyis* was the name of the Day Chief (*Ha'wilth N'aas*) (Golla 2000:167). The word *Kapkimyis* was not linguistically analysable but, according to Sapir (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:284), he was the son of *Kwatyat*, a trickster-transformer-creator being in Nuuchahnulth belief. Her informants thought this name had been given to Sapir. Otherwise, it was only known as a place name. Coté, the Tseshaht scholar at the University of Washington, also used *Kapkimyis* as the name of the Creator when she referred to the one who provided the two people, *Naasayilhim* (Sky-Day) and *Naasiya atu* (Day-Down), with a whaling harpoon and told them how to use it (Coté 2010). But the specific name of the 'Day Chief' was not mentioned in the story. Day Chief (*Ha'wilth N'aas*) told the first woman and man, 'You must pray to me at times for I will always hear what you want.' *Sayach'apis*<sup>21</sup> made a reference to this story and said 'this is why the Tseshaht people pray to Day Chief (*Ha'wilth N'aas*) for all things: health, wealth, food, piety, spiritual and shamanic power' (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:53-56).

Atleo insinuated that a better Nuuchahnulth name for God was *Quaootz* (Literal meaning: Owner of Reality). His reason was based on the historical contact with the Spanish explorer José Mariano Moziño, in the Mowachaht (Tahsis, BC) territory of the Nootka Sound on Vancouver Island. When he was asked about the Nuuchahnulth name for God, Chief Maquinna replied *Quaootz*. The literal meaning of *Quaootz* was the owner

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<sup>21</sup> *Sayach'apis*, born in 1843, a Tseshaht, was known to be a great hunter for sea mammals and a great storyteller. The stories he told appear in Edward Sapir's works.

(ootz) of reality (*qua*). *Quaootz* was also the word for a grandchild (Atleo 2004:16). It was possible that Chief Maquinna understood God as the literal meaning of the word, the owner of reality which suggested that he construed the concept of God almost as the Western theological understanding. But *Quaootz* as the name or the concept of God was seldom used by the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The most common Nuu-chah-nulth name for God is *N'aas* along with the Big Chief (*haathapi Ha 'wilth*) (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991).

The fact that there were different names for God in the Nuu-chah-nulth was neither a source of confusion nor competition. The Nuu-chah-nulth people believed that there was only one God but 'with many different names.'<sup>22</sup>

#### **3.4.6.2 Character of God**

How the Nuu-chah-nulth characterized God had an obvious influence on how they relate to him. The cultural understanding of the personality of God had a major effect not only on how they worshipped God but also on the cultural understanding of soteriology. The origin myth informed a few distinctive attributes they culturally ascribed to their understanding of God.

#### **Modest Character Sketch**

Genesis, the creation story in the OT, told the story that everything came from God. God alone acted in the story of the creation of the universe. The Hebrew people believed in a transcendent and powerful creator. The uniqueness of God in Christianity was understood as Creator and Redeemer and significant consequences for how He relates His creation was shown in His presence, power and knowledge operating in the world (Escobar &

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<sup>22</sup> My personal conversation with the late chief Fred Adam, of Ehatis, He shared his firm conviction about his understanding of God the Creator.



Shenk 2007:135). Hence, the attributes of God typically explained was as omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience.

On the stark contrary, the Nuu-chah-nulth story sketched God as a reluctant and unwilling party in the creative act. The Chief who owned the light carefully guarded it. Unlike the creation of an orderly world was followed in the Hebrew story, the Nuu-chah-nulth myth articulated that through the struggles and failed attempts the light was finally delivered to the people, and it was to illumine the world in the darkness, which in effect created the universe.

However, the Chief in the creation story was inefficiently passive and took a rather quiet role in creation. In comparison to the Genesis account, the Nuu-chah-nulth story did not delineate a powerful, creative, and transcendent image of God. This suggests that the approach to the idea of God in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture differed fundamentally from the OT story.

### **Guardian of Light**

In a culture where every decision was made in the communal process, the Nuu-chah-nulth story portrayed God, the Chief in the story, merely as a character in the story. The only role he played was that he was the primary guardian of the light. In the overall staging of the story, the Chief was a character like Son of Raven, Son of Deer, Wren, each only with a distinctive role. The Chief was not portrayed as the all-knowing but susceptible to the scam by the people who lived on the dark side. Such a description of the Chief, however, did not minimise the authority of the Chief's position. This delineation of the Chief somehow achieved the cultural appropriation of God.

### **God in Nuu-chah-nulth Hierarchy**

Moreover, the passive and humble depiction of the Chief was predisposed to their cultural understanding of hierarchy. The Nuu-chah-nulth hierarchy was an embedded feature of their society which was not earned by the external attributes or performance. Thus, their

hierarchy was not concerned with inequality in which dignity and honour were reflected, or of a social gradation, but with the values of influence, wisdom, and decision.

The fact of the Chief's ownership of the light fully explicated his position in creation regardless of his modest appearance. Recognition of this hierarchy was implicit from mutual respect and understanding of their values and functions within the scope of their society. Reciprocity or respect was an important standard of value in the Nuu-chah-nulth society, but it was hard to find in their cultural nature that any single individual was segregated from others for power or popularity.

### **Worship of God in Nuu-chah-nulth**

This delineation of the ordinary nature of God had a profound impact on how the Nuu-chah-nulth Christians worshipped in service. Provided the communal act of worshipping God was about the unswerving personal attributes of God, but, for the understanding of the God of the Nuu-chah-nulth people, the word worship could not but be a faint concept. They tended to focus on what He practically do or will do, rather than who He is or was. The most fundamental dynamic in keeping them connected with God was that they believe in ultimate care and guidance from God. The simple nature of this expectation appeared identical to what they expected from their ancestors.

### **Trickster Nature of God**

Moreover, in their hero myths, it was unmistakably at the centre of the story's development to overcome crises that unfolded through the wise deeds of a hero. As in *How the Raven Captured the Day*, the Son of Raven, trickster-transformer was at the centre of the scheme. Nuu-chah-nulths historically considered Son of Raven as a trickster creator. The Day-Chief was believed to have a personal name, Kapkimyis, who was the son of Kwatyat, a trickster-transformer-creator, according to the anthropologist, Susan Golla (2000:167). The Tseshah scholar, Coté, believes that Kapkimyis was the one who created the first man and woman in the Tseshah story (Coté 2010).

The trickster image of God draws him to be clever, exhilarating, deceitfully wise, but virtually unpredictable. These images were quite comparable to those of the holy, unchanging, and personal God, generally understood by Christianity. Their casual use of a trick or trickster as a literary tool for storytelling proved that they favoured such a heroic personality. This infused within their understanding of the nature of God and had a considerable impact on the character of their worship service.

Therefore, it was difficult for the traditional Christian liturgies which were developed in a long tradition of Western Christianity to be harmonized perfectly with the cultural form of the Nuu-chah-nulth Christianity.

### **Impartation of God's Essence to Human**

In summary, modern Nuu-chah-nulths called God *N'aas*. This name was culturally accepted. The creation story told that the word *n'aas* means 'day' or 'light,' and the light was the essence of the creation, and the Chief in the story was God. The Tseshaht creation story delivered a unique perspective about the light (*n'ass*) about the nature of God. The story introduced a refined name for God *Ha'wilth N'aas*, literally means 'Day-Chief.' The Tseshaht creation story showed evidence of the cultural appropriation of Christian theology.

*Ha'wilth N'aas* (**Day Chief**) created the first two people, *Naasayilhim* (Sky-**day**) and *Naasiya atu* (**Day-Down**). The morphology of their names with the pre-fix *naas-*, suggested that the creative essence, the light (*n'ass*) was imparted on the characters of the created. This story paralleled with the OT story of the creation of humans. The Genesis account of creation of the first two humans told that Adam and Eve were created in the image of God (Genesis 1.26-27). God 'formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being' (Genesis 2:7). This theological development was also seen as evidence of the influence of the Christian story. The element of light (*nass-*) used for the impartation of God's essence to humans fortified the foregoing argument that the theme of light was an important topic

in religious studies (3.4.5), and a common element of the light in religion was to bring people out of the darkness and project them into a better world (Eliade 1971:2).

### **Implication of Intimacy**

In Trinitarian theology, the fatherhood of God and the sonship of Jesus were upheld to be the key idea of the NT (John 8: 19). Throughout gospel accounts, Jesus personally referred to God as Father and prompted his followers to relate to Him as the same (Matthew 6: 9). Hence, the most essential theme in the gospel of Jesus was the revelation of the fatherhood of God which later gave the reason for the accusation of blasphemy by the Jewish religious establishment (Matthew 26: 65). This idea of an intimate relationship of God began from God's luminous image, glory, in the creation of humans in Genesis (Genesis 1: 27). The same linguistic evidence suggests that the idea of the intimacy of N'aas started with the imparting of N'aas' image to *Naasayilhim* and *Naasiya atu*.

The study so far established that the Nuu-chah-nulth appropriation of the Christian notion of God. These cultural appropriations took place over a period of time since the Christian gospel was introduced and the process was natural.

### **Reluctance of Chief and Holiness of God**

In Christian scripture described the holiness of God. The holiness was an attribute that belonged to God (Isa. 6.3, Rev. 15.4) and separated God from his creation. Thus, the holiness expressed the absoluteness, the dignity, and the horror of the Creator. The use of the word 'holiness' was a corresponding general term for 'Godhead.' The 'holy' was synonymous with 'divinity' (Daniel 4.8, 9, 18, Isaiah 52.10, Psalm 98.1, Lev. 20: 3).

The Nuu-chah-nulth creation story implied this idea of holiness. The idea of the creation, to the Chief, was unpleasant (3.4.2). The Chief was indifferent to the idea of creation. The indifference was delivered by the fact that the Chief figure in all creation stories disfavoured sharing the light with the dark world. This unwillingness highlighted the difference between the spiritual side and the mundane.

The rudiments that made up the spiritual world were different from the physical world. Such differences prevented the sharing of light from the spiritual world to the mundane world. The unwillingness of the Chief in the origin myths highlighted the difference and separateness and triggered God's holiness to be revealed in the stories.

It is a Christian mandate to be holy, as Apostle Peter said, 'Just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do' (1Peter 1.16). The concept of holiness in traditional Christianity was understood in terms of segregation. For example, a passage in the New Testament affirmed that the dwelling of God was in 'unapproachable light' (1 Tim. 6:16). The perfect holiness was unapproachable by humans. For the Nuu-chah-nulths, however, the idea of holiness was understood in balance and harmony as was discussed in Chapter Five.

#### **3.4.7 Heshook-ish Tsawalk and Isaak**

From the headings of the creation stories, it was implied that there was a world existed, 'across the waters,' which was different from the dark world where people initially lived. The story described the location of this other world as 'across the waters,' or 'along the bank of a stream' or that its existence was assumed. It was the shared belief among the indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest that the physical and spiritual worlds closely intertwined. There was no sharp distinction between real experience and illusions. Moogk described that the Nuu-chah-nulth cosmos consists of three profane realms – land, sea, and sky, and the fourth supernatural realm of power, which occupies is between other three (1980: 97).

In the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language, *heshook-ish tsawalk* meant 'everything is one.' Nuu-chah-nulths used this phrase practically to mean that everyone was related with everyone else, natural world, events that happen around individual and family and friends, and spiritual world. The Nuu-chah-nulths thought that everyone in the world, all of nature, all phenomena, all the events were connected and influenced each other. Hence, they thought

it was important that everything needs be balanced in the right way. And they also thought that all of these included the spiritual world and spiritual phenomena. The Nuu-chah-nulth people treated dreams and visions as reality and doing so did no harm anyone's reputation.<sup>23</sup> This idea had a significant weight on the understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview, upon which their culture based.

Thus, properly following the right protocol ensured their safety and prosperity. On an improper execution of protocols, the imbalance might cause harm to the individual or the community. However, they were not sure how they might trigger imbalance in their lives. They understand that the universe was orderly, but one could not know it; one could only attempt to stay in harmony with it. Causation is indefinable in personal terms. Therefore, the universe is still full of dangers.

To regulate the behaviours and the conditions to maintain a good balance, the Nuu-chah-nulth applied the principle of *Isaak* to everything, everyone, and every situation. The closest English word that can match the concept of *Isaak* is the word 'respect.' The social display of *Isaak* was imaginable in a combination of a modest attitude and respect for the others. But it was not to be construed in humanistic terms because it was the character of a network of relationships created by the mystery of Creation (Atleo 2004:16). Perhaps it was similar to spiritual maturity or a gift. A similar metaphor was found in Indra's 'Net' in Buddhism speaking of hidden interconnectedness and interdependency of everything and everyone in the universe (Mitchell 1993). Christianity could relate it with the 'Golden Rule,' taught by Jesus of Nazareth, who used it to summarize the Torah: 'Do to others what you want them to do to you. And this is the meaning of the law of Moses and the teaching of the prophets' (Matt. 7.12; see also Luke 6.31).

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<sup>23</sup> An Ahousaht young man who attended the School of Discipleship (SOD) run by Ekklesia Ministries International (EMI) in 2000 talked seriously about the dream he had at a night before as if it happened in real life: his grandfather appeared in the dream and said some words that he treated them as happened in real life.

Furthermore, the unique perspective of their kinship with nature resulted in the preservation of the ecosystem. The Nuu-chah-nulth kinship, along with other Indigenous peoples, defined people, animal, and plants. This idea of kinship affected every aspect of Indigenous life, from traditional food practice to their relationship to the water, animals, and the ecosystem.

The revitalization of a traditional food tradition was considered one of the ways for them to restore a healthy and vibrant nation. Their food kinship was celebrated through the ceremony of sharing food. But when contact with European settlers was made, the reservation system came in, as a part of the colonial system, which meant that they lost the right to go to places and resulted in the gradual loss of traditional food as well as their relationships to the water, animals, and the ecosystem. Their traditional knowledge about food also taught them about where to gather food, how to gather food, and how to care for them. Since their environment was intimately intertwined with their lives, the restoration of the environment was directly connected to the recovery of themselves and the community.

Cattle and sheep were brought by the Hudson Bay Company and plants and flowers were destroyed. The older generation Nuu-chah-nulths knew at least on average ten plants as common-sense medicine. They would run into a bush to get them whenever they needed them. They considered them as sacred medicine from God. The Nuu-chah-nulths were hunters. The traditional way of hunting involved making snares in the ways that respected all life forms. Over-trapping was not allowed, and the villagers knew how many animals were there. Some animals were not for skinning, and each animal had a way to clean them and prepare them. Songs and ceremonies were performed before or after hunting an animal.

Ecology understood in the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth ecological knowledge was in moderation and balance. The Nuu-chah-nulth believed that moderation and the balancing of the environment come from the attitude of respect (*Isaak*). Roy Haiyupis, a Nuu-chah-

nulth elder and former member of the Scientific Panel for Sustainable Forest Practices, explained how spiritual teachings translate into the ethics of stewardship:

Respect (*Isaak*) is the very core of our traditions, culture and existence. It is very basic to all we encounter in life. Respect for nature requires a healthy state of stewardship with a healthy attitude. It is wise to respect nature. Respect the spiritual...It is not human to waste food. It is inhuman to over-exploit. Protect and conserve are key values in respect of nature and natural food resources. Never harm or kill for sport. It is degrading to your honour...It challenges your integrity and accountability. Nature...once broken, will hit back (Haiyupis 1995:6-7).

*Isaak* for preserving ecological balance was not exactly in line with the ‘democracy’ and ‘equality’ with nature as Lynn White espoused, in his thesis *The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis* (White 1967: 1205) but came from a healthy state of stewardship and a healthy attitude. The modern perspective established a system that left humans outside nature or made us believe that we were dominant over the environment. The Nuu-chah-nulth cultural practices centred on responsibilities that evolved into unwritten laws over an extended period. These responsibilities and laws were directly tied to nature and a product of the slow integration of cultures within their environment and the ecosystems (Happynook 2000:40).

Cedar trees are used for making houses, totem poles, crafts, masks, and clothing. The inner cedar barks are used for their crafts and clothing and big trunks for dugout canoes. When they cut the whole tree or the portions of it, a thanksgiving ritual precedes cutting. For whaling, they applied a detailed protocol and prayer ritual (*oo-sumch*) before they went out (Happynook 2010:45). These rituals and protocols expressed their gratitude and reminded them of the responsible use of the natural resources

In the Tseshah creation story, *Ha'wilth N'aas* (Day Chief) gave the first humans a whaling harpoon to use for catching whales for food. The traditional Nuu-chah-nulth and the Makah were known as the whaling people (Coté 2010). In Genesis, God gave Adam and Eve every tree that had fruit with seed as their food (Genesis 1.29). Despite the linguistic expressions that pose difficulties in the creation accounts, or they could be a case of missing in translation, it is clear that both *Ha'wilth N'aas* and God established the



stewardship of people over all creation. The management of the natural environment can be seen as a structure that is deeply embedded in their lives. The Nuu-chah-nulth Chiefs and the people responsibly managed their natural resources (5.4). Any exploitation of nature is seen as a vice in their villages.

### **3.4.8 Son of Raven as an Archetype of Christ**

Son of Raven appeared in all the stories as the hero who initiated and accomplished the task of distributing the light. The Raven appeared in many legends and literature. Ravens were common characters in traditional narratives and mythology around the world, notably a part of North American, Siberian, and Norse mythology (Orchard 1997) and Celtic mythology (Sax 2011: 36-40). Most of these referred to the widespread common raven. Its black colour, croaking sound, and diet of dead flesh seemed to make it a bird of ill omen and of interest to creators of myths and legends.

Lévi-Strauss, as the central figure in the Structuralist school of thought,<sup>24</sup> studied the underlying patterns of thought in all forms of human activity and argued that the ‘savage’ mind had the same structures as the ‘civilized’ mind and that human characteristics were the same everywhere. These observations culminated in his famous book *Tristes Tropiques* (Lévi-Strauss 1961). He thought the trickster of many Indigenous mythologies acted as a mediator. His argument hinged on two facts about the Indigenous trickster: 1) the trickster had a contradictory and unpredictable personality, and 2) the trickster was almost always a raven or, in some cases, a coyote. He maintained that the raven and coyote mediated the opposition between life and death. The relationship between

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<sup>24</sup> Structuralism, in critical theory, is a theoretical paradigm emphasizing that elements of human culture must be understood in terms of their relationship to a larger, overarching system or structure. It works to uncover the structures that underlie all the things that humans do, think, perceive, and feel. Alternately, as summarized by the philosopher, Simon Blackburn, structuralism is the belief that phenomena of human life are not intelligible except through their interrelations. These relations constitute a structure, and behind local variations in the surface phenomena there are constant laws of abstract culture (Blackburn 2008).

agriculture and hunting was analogous to the opposition between life and death: agriculture was solely concerned with producing life, whereas hunting was concerned with producing death. He pointed out that the raven and coyote ate carrion and were halfway between herbivores and beasts of prey: like beasts of prey, they ate meat, like herbivores, they did not catch their food (Lévi-Strauss 2008).

There was a tendency, among traditional Indigenous religious leaders, to find parallels between their cultural hero and Jesus Christ. A prominent Anishinaabe religious leader, *Shinboge*, in the *Midewiwin*<sup>25</sup> order, equated their cultural hero, *Wenabozho*, to Jesus Christ. The birth of *Wenabozho* generally stated that the ‘west wind’ was his father. But *Shinboge* taught that *Wenabozho*, along with Jesus Christ, was the son of God (Gross 2003:131).

Richard Atleo, likewise, wanted to see Son of Raven as an archetype of Christ, referring to the story (os.2) that, Son of Raven became a child of the Chief. He noted that it was possible for people to become children of the Creator and, only after Christianity brought the similar story, this became clear to the Nuu-chah-nulth. He saw that the Christ figure was an archetype of the Creator’s child. Thus, Son of Raven, he continued, was an archetype hero and saviour (Atleo 2004:18). This idea did not find a wide acceptance among the Nuu-chah-nulth people simply because they did not see the need to relate their culture to others (Simpson 2006).

The same discussions in the recorded documents appeared suggested that their culture heroes were thought to be the Creator. Sapir noted that, among the Barkley Sound groups, *Kwatyat*<sup>26</sup> was the transformer and culture hero who was believed to have been the creator of all things and to have had the power of transforming himself into anything (Sapir &

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<sup>25</sup> Anishinaabe’s traditional religious society, generally accepted that the fourth degree of initiation if the highest level in that order

<sup>26</sup> *Kwatyat* is another name for Son of Raven, beside *Ko-shin-mit*, which appears in Sapir’s Texts.

Swadesh 1939: 217). Makah also considered that *Kwahtie*,<sup>27</sup> their culture hero and the trickster figure, arranged the present landscape, stealing the daylight from its owner and timing the tides so that people could gather shellfish (Colson 1953: 47).

But, in the northern Nuuchah-nulth narratives, *Kwatyat* played a buffoon's role, while *Andaokot*, also known as Mucus-made or Snot Boy (Arima 1983: 50), was the primary transformer and culture hero. In mythology, a trickster was a god, goddess, spirit, man, woman, or anthropomorphic animal that played tricks or otherwise disobeyed normal rules and conventional behaviour. The trickster, similar to a clown, was an example of a Jungian archetype. Archetypes are universal, archaic patterns and images that derive from the collective unconscious and are the psychic counterpart of instinct (Feist & Feist 2008). A trickster often served as a character archetype, but he himself was not supernatural or divine. The trickster was distinct in a story by his acting as a sort of catalyst, in that his tricks were the cause of other characters' embarrassment or discomfiture, but he himself was left untouched. In the main story, the character of Son of Raven (*Kwatyat* or *Ko-ishin-mit*)<sup>28</sup> appeared to serve as the archetype of all human existence, rather than of a deity. His openness to life's multiplicity and paradoxes, despite his heroic triumph, neutralized him to be the same as any other. Son of Raven suffered in living in darkness, frustrated by the condition, and wanted to solve the problem. Son of Raven became the benefactor in the story, in his 'mischievous and adventurous' character, as described in the Tlingit version, and by his 'uncontrollable desires and excesses' (Walens 1989:95), in the act of trying to satisfy his desires, he inadvertently created the results. Different circumstances of the human existence changed the external appearance and the social role. But the core of who we were remained the same. Likewise, although the body of

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<sup>27</sup> *Kwahtie* is believed to be the same character as *Kwatyat* in the Makah stories.

<sup>28</sup> *Ko-ishin-mit* literally means Son (*mit*) of Deer (*Ko-ishin*), used in the collection of stories by George Clutesi in *Son of Raven, Son of Deer* (1969). *Kwatyat* is the traditional name given to Son of Raven, a mythical character. The two names point to the same mythical character.

Son of Raven, as being a trickster, easily transformed into other kinds of life form, such as a salmon, a salmonberry shoot, a tiny leaf, and a child, in all cases the essential being of Son of Raven remained the same. Because the Nuu-chah-nulth storyteller and audience all knew who Son of Raven was all along through his transformations. The transformations of Son of Raven proved more vulnerability than power.

Every mythical story had animated characters to bring the entertaining aspect or amusement to the listeners, like in the fables of Aesop.<sup>29</sup> However, animal characters represented humans because it was generally accepted in the Northwest Coast cultures that humans were essentially inferior to the rest of the world's inhabitants and dependent on other creatures' goodwill for survival (Walens 1989:91). The Nuu-chah-nulth believed that eagles were very sacred birds and that they took prayers to *N'aas*. When they see eagles circling in the sky, they said their prayers.<sup>30</sup>

#### **3.4.9 Tsshaht Insertion**

A Tsshaht myth was woven into the main story of creation as discussed. In its story, Son of Deer joined the community in effort to capture the light (fire). His ability to run fast and leap far had a great potential to capture the fire, as we noted that a shift was made in objectives, from the light to fire. But the fire was also contained in the Day box. This story of Son of Deer was found in the Tsshaht story by Clutesi, *How the Human People Got The First Fire* (Clutesi 1967: 17-28), which was a story presented in George Clutesi's collections of Tsshaht stories. The hero in this story was Son of Deer, *Ah-tush-mit* (Son of Deer). *Ah-tush-mit*, with bravery and inventiveness, danced in front of the Wolf people

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<sup>29</sup> Aesop's Fables, or the Aesopica, is a collection of fables credited to Aesop, a slave and story-teller believed to have lived in ancient Greece between 620 and 564 BCE. Of diverse origins, the stories associated with his name have descended to modern times through some sources and continue to be reinterpreted in different verbal registers and accessible as well as artistic media.

<sup>30</sup> Salina Frank, an Ahousaht elder, shared this story in a personal conversation at Ahousaht, BC.

and their Chief, to capture the first fire. But, conversely, in the abridged insert in the main story, the story of Son of Deer was redacted as he failed the attempt.

The twist reflected the long rivalry and hostile history between the two villages (Sapir & Swadesh 1955: 342-6; 350-3; 445-50). But there was open possibility that the insertion was due to an inter-tribal marriage. Margaret Atleo, the mother of Richard Atleo, the storyteller, was not from Tseshahat but from Keltsmaht.<sup>31</sup> Thus, there was no evidence to support the idea of inter-tribal marriage in the case.

A similar literary structure of the summarized Tseshahat insert was not appeared in the Tlingit, Salish and Haida stories proved that the insertion was unlikely a part of the original story.

#### **3.4.10 *Oo-sumch* and Prayer Protocol**

Prayer protocol, *oo-sumch*, was a commonly practiced prayer ritual. The Nuu-chah-nulth facilitated *oo-sumch* as the principal means of prayer even after conversion to Christian faith. Before Son of Deer (*Ah-tush-mit*) carried out the critical task, he went into a preparation, which consists of ritual, ceremony, and practice. In order for Son of Deer (*Ah-tush-mit*) to dance for the Chief who owned the day (*n'aas*), protocols must be observed. Petitions, preparations, prayers, cleansing ceremonies and a great deal of self-discipline and practice would take place before he could appear before the Chief.

Personal spiritual practice was a very private matter and usually not shared with others.<sup>32</sup> The Nuu-chah-nulth who engaged in a traditional prayer period, *oo-sumch*, disappeared into the wood for four days without telling others about their whereabouts. That may be why the detail protocols did not appear in the story. However, every listener

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<sup>31</sup> Margaret Miller, Ehatis elder, informed me that Richard Atleo's maternal ancestry is from Keltsmaht, BC.

<sup>32</sup> Barry Titian, Ahousaht, informed me about their spiritual prayer practice *oo-sumch* during my visit to his house in Ahousaht, BC.

during traditional story times was well versed in the necessary of observing the appropriate process (Atleo 2004: 7).

It was a norm for Indigenous people in Northwest that their storytelling was the cultures' communicative systems both the storyteller and audience agreed upon culturally situated meanings (Thom 2003: 3). Thus, the Nuu-chah-nulth knew that the preparation for this kind of task involved a periodic isolation, bathing and washing in white water, intense seeking and praying to hear the wisdom and assurance before the task. In the process of *oo-sumch*,<sup>33</sup> the Nuu-chah-nulth people received songs, visions and revelations of spiritual and medicinal knowledge.<sup>34</sup> When they made an important life decision, perhaps, to engage in a public ceremony, or to go on a dangerous mission, they went for *oo-sumch*.

There were many protocols that the Nuu-chah-nulth observed for special events. Certain protocols were required before cutting a cedar tree (*humiis*) and stripping barks (*tsaqmis*).<sup>35</sup> Usually a short ceremony of singing and dancing and a prayer was offered. After fish were eaten, the uneaten portions and the bones (*hamuut*) were returned to the sea, as thanksgiving ritual.<sup>36</sup> Historically, the chief (*ha'wilth*) and the canoeists ventured out to hunt whale (*iihtuup*), in the early spring when the food supplies were short for the coastal villagers. The whaling chief (*ha'wilth*) underwent months of complex rituals and ceremonial preparation to assure their success in whaling. Not only the chief and his companions but also the chief's wife and others on land observed a very detailed and exacting protocols which involved *oo-sumch*. Any lack of preparation or omission resulted in failure or affected the persons involved or the entire community, depending

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<sup>33</sup> *Oo-sumch*. Also spelled '*oo-sumch*' (Charlotte Cote 2010) or '*oosumch*' (Richard Atleo 2004)

<sup>34</sup> Marshall Thomas, an Ahousaht drummer, singer, and songwriter, told me that he received his songs from above in his prayer *oo-sumch*.

<sup>35</sup> I have personally participated along with Nuu-chah-nulth people in a number of these rituals.

<sup>36</sup> From Salina Frank of Ahousaht, BC.

on the tasks. They saw these failures as spiritual imbalance due to improper protocol (Atleo 2004; Côté 2010).

Concerning the public prayer, in most of their public ceremonies, a high-ranking chief or a spiritual elder offered a prayer in the traditional language, often followed by a translated English prayer. Their prayers, either in traditional ceremony or in their Christian assembly, were completely assimilated with and sounded like prayers of the Christian Church. They, however, invoked *N'aas* and/or God in the prayers without ascriptions such as 'Dear,' 'Loving,' or 'Almighty.'

#### **3.4.11 Wisdom of Elders**

As the story progressed, the elaborate plan of Son of Deer to capture the fire failed. They needed more wisdom. Wren, the wise one, was called for. Despite the good advice that Wren had given, because of his egotistical one-upmanship, it was the blunders of Son of Raven that made Wren's initial plans failed.

Elders' wisdom was highly upheld in the Nuuchahnulth society. In the traditional setting, their wisdom served as a judiciary medium to hold the authority to influence the final outcome of a communal decision. Their wisdom reflected the societal values connected to the core values of their ancestors. Elders were not only considered wise but also the law of the community.<sup>37</sup> The elders' wisdom was always sought in every important personal and communal event in the Nuuchahnulth community. The essence of the Elders' wisdom lied in bringing harmony and balance, instead of discerning and judging good and evil or deciding success and failure.

Despite the repeated blunders of Son of Raven, Wren did not reject or chastise Son of Raven. Instead, he devised a plan that positively utilized the heroic exploit of Son of

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<sup>37</sup> I have observed during my living in the Nuuchahnulth villages that the ultimate decision or resolution to any problem in the community is made in the communal wisdom of the elders.

Raven. The elders' wisdom and guidance were reflected in many aspects of the Nuuchah-nulth culture and social structure.

#### **3.4.12 Progenitor: Spirit, Light, and Seed**

The Haida story told that Son of Raven fell in love with the beautiful daughter of Grey Eagle. Since in the beginning Raven was a snow-white bird, he was allowed to come into the longhouse of Grey Eagle. Other stories told that the daughter of the Chief swallowed a tiny leaf and became pregnant. These two facts together suggested that there was a union between Son of Raven and the daughter of the Chief, and that these two were involved in procreation.

In the principal story, Son of Raven injected himself as a tiny leaf into the womb of the Chief's daughter and emerged as the baby son of the daughter. The light also symbolized the progenerative power in traditional religious documents. It was believed that the human father emitted him as seed into the womb, whereas it was really the light that emitted him as seed into the womb (*Jaiminiya Upanisad Brahamana*, III, 10:4-5 quoted in Eliade 1971: 3). The light as a progenitor was an extremely widespread conception. In some myths and folktales, the notion of 'virginity' was expressed by vocables meaning 'non-sunstroke' (Hartland 1910).<sup>38</sup> The birth or illumination of the great saviours and sages was announced by a profusion of supernatural light (Eliade 1971: 4).

The connection between light and birth was also seen in Tibetan myth and among the Mongols. According to legend, Genghis Khan's ancestor was born from a divine being, who descended into the tent through the smoke-hole, similar to luminous trail, and whose light penetrated into the mother's body. The Tibetan myths explained the origin of the universe and man from a White Light and a Primordial Being (Eliade 1962: 45-9).

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<sup>38</sup> On Impregnation by the Sun, see E. S. Hartland, *Primitive Paternity* (London, 1910), 1:25 ff., 89 ff. The significance of such a mythological motif is also corroborated by its integration and revalorization in Christian iconography. In a great number of Byzantine and Greek Orthodox icons, as well as in some famous Western narratives, a ray of light extends directly from the Sun to the Virgin.



Eliade's theory of the consubstantiality of godhead – spirit – light – seed (Eliade 1971: 6) was also perceptible in the story.

Nevertheless, certain words (concepts) and analogies used in the Pacific Northwest origin stories reverberated with the legends in these documents. Especially the first light that came through 'the smoke hole,' in the Tlingit story resembled the 'light penetrated in the mother's body' through 'the smoke hole' in the legend of Genghis Khan. The smoke hole also appeared, in the Salish version, as the escape route of Son of Raven 'with the bag of light.'

This discussion considered whether the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus written in the New Testament was a widely used idea in past religions prior to theological formation of Christianity, or a religious theory resulting from the influence of Christian theology. It has been nearly 2,000 years since Christian theology was formulated, and the birth theory of saviour figures in religion was more likely to spread to human culture in many ways.

### **3.4.13 Birthrights of Son of Raven**

Again, Son of Raven fell in love with the daughter of Grey Eagle. He entered the longhouse of Grey Eagle and suggested that this was a legitimate union. But the fact that the daughter of the chief was surprised when she found out her pregnancy proves otherwise. Unsanctioned sexual relationships were considered degrading to the persons involved as well as the families of both parties. Living together without proper marriage was called *thuchis*, which was considered a disgrace to both families. A child born of such a union was called *thutchish'okt* (bastard) (Drucker 1951: 287). The term could be used in the same way as its English equivalent. Motherhood, however, was valued as sacred that the family accepted unplanned pregnancies brought by unmarried young daughter as God's gift in the Nuu-chah-nulth families.<sup>39</sup> A possible reason for this would

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<sup>39</sup> From Salina Frank, Ahousaht elder.

be that the Nuu-chah-nulth were matrilineal clans. In a matrilineal culture, the children and the offspring lived near and were cared by the matriarch of the clan.

While the Haida story omitted this section, a baby was born to the daughter of the chief in the main story. The baby was another transformation of the Son of Raven. The baby resembled him, with black hair and a short temper. The resemblance was so noticeable that the old people in the village suspected that it was Son of Raven. Each time the baby wanted something, he cried. As a child born into the Chief's family, Son of Raven had access to all magical things, the canoe, the pedal, and the Day-box.

#### **3.4.14 Place of Women**

The position of the Nuu-chah-nulth women in the community was equal to men. In the story, the Day Box was closely guarded by the family. The mother would not allow the son to play with the Day Box in his canoe. But the grandmother told her daughter to 'show mercy' to the pleading son. It was the grandmother who held the most influential authority in the Chief's family. This part of the story demonstrated that there was a strong place for women in the Nuu-chah-nulth society. The women run the community and made decisions for the family and community while the men in the village devote their energy and time to fishing, hunting and going to diplomatic events. Their living arrangements were made alongside the matrilineal line. Most of the early historical sources speak highly of the virtue of all Nuu-chah-nulth women (Drucker 1951: 287). Each young woman was given a rite of the coming of age when she was reaching a maturity. The coming of age ceremony was very important to show everybody that a young woman was important, and it was the stepping-stone for future marriage. The matrilineal perspective on the lineages of certain Nuu-chah-nulth families in the Nuu-chah-nulth villages was observed, while it had never been generally stated that the Nuu-chah-nulth was a matriarchal society.

Matriarchy is when the mother is the head of the family. Matrilineal is when the family line is determined or inherited through the matriline kin line. Nuuchahnulth families lived close to their grandmothers.

### **3.4.15 Nuuchahnulth Myth and Christian Creation Account**

The Nuuchahnulth origin myth spared the explanation of the creation of the rest of their world. It missed the description of how mountains, oceans, and rivers existed. Typical origin myths described the creation of nature, terrain, people, plants, and animals. However, the Nuuchahnulth story presented a lengthy description of the advent of the light but no description of how the physical world came to be. The anthropologist Brian Thom noted that telling a story for Indigenous people of Northwest tribes was a complex interplay of inseparable elements of language, thought, and reality, and was their cultures' communicative system to deliver cultural situations (Thom 2003: 3). The narrative element of geography often claimed its history and ownership of the narrator or the group (Garfield 1966: 52). Although clear evidence was shown in the twist of the Tseshah insertion, telling the history of the apparent tribal rivalry, the missing geography in the story was a possible indication that the story also wanted to tell their cultural position to maintain the idea that the Nuuchahnulth world existed a long time before Christianity arrived. This may have to do with the colonial situation and their cultural pride. Whether the omissions were deliberate and the part of changes in their creation story, they were necessary, consequently, to avoid structural conflicts between their cultural and historical knowledge and the Christian account of the Creation. The audience was *Ahous*<sup>40</sup> who had intimate knowledge of their territory and their land where they lived.

Moreover, the Nuuchahnulth story delivered a story featuring the traditional culture heroes like Son of Raven, Son of Deer, Mice, and Wren, distinct from other Raven stories,

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<sup>40</sup> *Ahous* is Ahousaht people. Ahousaht means the place (village) of *Ahous*.

indicated that the story was also about their traditional society. In their origin myth, the weight of their community's existence appears stronger than the creation story itself. Their community holds an important theological position in understanding the Christian gospel.

The use of images of their ancestors in the process of understanding God and the fact that their world existed before the world created by light are also related to their religious stance and dimorphic conversion to be discussed later.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

The story of *Son of Raven Captured the Day* is an origin-myth of the Nuuchahnulth people about the creation of the universe. The Son of Raven story travelled through different places and time and settled in Nuuchahnulth as one of its destinations. The story developed a distinctive version with a set of cultural ideas and values of the Nuuchahnulth. The oral tradition of storytelling is an important way in which the Nuuchahnulth understands their culture and history.

The linguistic features of the written records rendered insights into the understanding of the words and concepts in the story. The earlier observers like Drucker, Boas, Sapir, and Swadesh, laid an irreplaceable groundwork for studying the Nuuchahnulth culture. Their works go back at least two hundred years of Nuuchahnulth history, customs, and tradition.

An origin myth is the story form of communication about their knowledge about the cosmos. The narrative structure of this creation story informed that this story was, in no doubt, about the celebration about their communal existence since it displayed its literary features the important cultural items relate to their community: Light, Chief, Canoe, Community, Wisdom of Elder, Childbirth and the Matriline.

The chapter aimed to probe into the traditional worldview of the Nuuchahnulth people. The study found that the Chief was a symbolic depiction of the farthest lineage of their ancestors, the one whom they believed to have the source of life. After contact,

with historical processes and the influence of the Christian narrative, they naturally integrated the idea of God with 'the Chief.' The introduction of Christian God enhanced the idea of 'the Chief,' their creator-deity. Christian stories had much influence on their stories as Nuu-chah-nulth interacted with the Christianity for over two centuries. Understandably, their stories naturally adapted their culturally understood view of Christian stories. In a likely process, the Chief in the origin myth embodied the ideas of Christian God while maintaining the cultural character. For this reason, their conception of God manifested in their cultural characteristics which changed the exterior look of their Christianity.

However, there was a fundamental disconnect between their cultural orientation and the Christian culture of Western interpretation. In other words, the Nuu-chah-nulth myth was challenging to understand by theological comparison of the origin myth of the OT because their understanding of ancestors was not directly comparable to the God of Christian theological understanding. Therefore, the study of the chapter explored how their cultural positions play a role in shaping their understanding of God. It was the character of God that the Nuu-chah-nulth cultural particularities found as a difference in theological understanding, as described by their origin myths. Whereas the Christian God was depicted as omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, the Nuu-chah-nulth God had a passive disposition. This cultural difference caused the way the Nuu-chah-nulth related God to differ from the way Western Christians did, and as a result, this difference affected the forms of worship and the salvific ideas. The Nuu-chah-nulth believe that God is one and that all cultures each have a cultural way of understanding God. As a result, Nuu-chah-nulth Christians were freed from the pressure to abandon their traditional understanding of God without rejecting the God of Christianity.

They perceived life was arduous and full of dangers, and that wisdom, courage and inner harmony and balance were essential to achieve a successful life. Life has a duality

of successes and failures, as their story outlined. Individuals cannot achieve goals without careful preparation and prayer.

Darkness described the overall condition of the proto-universe, much like the conditions described and the same basic structure found in the creation stories around the world. Mythical thought always progresses from the awareness of oppositions toward their resolution, from darkness to light, and profane to holy. The origin story of Son of Raven revealed that the Nuu-chah-nulth saw light as the generative force of the world which was reflected in the name they use for God, N'aas. The two different sides of the world implied in the story only explained the two different aspects of the universe. In their worldview, the two sides were much more intimately knitted with one another and not compartmentalized in the practical manifestations of their culture.

Son of Raven, their culture-hero served as an archetype of human existence, instead of being their saviour. That neither the storyteller nor the audience had difficulties with the appearance of physical beings in the process of the creation of the physical universe was a possible indication that the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of time dissipated the sequence of the creation. However, unlike the Greek and other mythologies of the polytheistic pre-created universe, and much like the creation story of the Old Testament, the Nuu-chah-nulth perceived that there was N'aas (Day, God). Christianity as a dominant cultural form had a major influence on their culture, including the structure of their oral narratives. But it is not clear whether their own interpretations of the origin myth came after they received the Christian story of creation.

A number of findings on cultural motifs emerged in the story. The community was there from the beginning because of the Nuu-chah-nulths it is the natural order of existence. The value of each member of the community was never overlooked, as everyone participated with individual talents. The task of capturing the day (light) could not have been achieved without the team effort of the community. The features of both male and female characters, and significant roles attributed to the women as daughters,

mothers, childbirth, and grandmothers, portrayed the Nuu-chah-nulth as an egalitarian society. But their social structure needs further study in other sections. The wisdom of the elders had a major influence on the principles by which they operated as individuals or as a community.

Finally, they told the story in the long winter nights during the rainy season when all the ocean activities were quietened. As the day breaks in the early morning, ravens were swarming on beaches, pecking at the roofs of the houses, and going about finding their food. The world the Nuu-chah-nulths imagined was the world that had a dark side that was illumined by the light. They imagined the world that consisted of personal engagements and interactions in mutuality with others and with the different side of the world that had the light.





## CHAPTER FOUR

### POTLATCH

#### 4.1 Introduction

The study in this chapter will address the question, ‘How do older Nuu-chah-nulth ideas influence their social practices?’ Potlatch was a word commonly used to refer to traditional feasts of the Indigenous tribes of Northwest Canada that showed various aspects of the communal practices. The communal practice in the Nuu-chah-nulth feasts showed some aspects of religion that can relate to the contextual understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth Christian ideas.

The traditional Indigenous society was a tribal society, but even after contact with European culture, their traditional social structures remained intact. Their cultures were largely demonstrated in traditional ceremonies and rituals. Their traditional feasts were also the governing bodies that maintained their social orders, through which they promoted the unity of communities, and reasserted the ranks and rights of families within the tribe, announced official decisions, and reinforced tribal structures. The rituals held in potlatch reaffirmed their values and their culture, as well. Jace Weaver classified Indigenous culture as ‘communitarian,’ (Weaver 1998) as he highlighted their centeredness in community. The official nature of their communal functions was tangibly operated through their communal feasts and communal ceremonial events.

Their traditional communal practice of justice and restoration could also inform about the Nuu-chah-nulth theological definition of sin, repentance, and redemption. Their cultural ideas about personhood also could reveal how they viewed the completion about

human life and its influences on theological formation of the idea about ‘heaven’ and the Christian notion of ‘Kingdom of God.’

## 4.2 Background

The cultural idea of the potlatch was popular among the Indigenous tribes of the Pacific Northwest, Alaska, and their neighbours. Each cultural division had its own name, variations in procedure, and details of ceremonial performance. But the shared ideas of gathering, feasting and gift giving were maintained throughout all tribes of the Northwest.

The major Tlingit and Haida potlatches occurred at the death of a chief, with a funeral and memorial ceremony for the deceased and a validation of the accession of the successor. Among the central coast Kwakiutl and Bella Coola, occasions for potlatches were more numerous, following a succession of events in the life cycle of an individual—birth, puberty, winter ceremonial initiation, marriage, and death—all of which meant the transfer of privileges, names, and ranks. These differences reflected variation in the social structure, kinship, and descent systems of the groups involved (Cole 1985: 6).

The etymology of the word ‘potlatch’ traced back to the Nuuchah-nulth (Nootka) word, *pachitle* (to give) (Atleo 2004: 39). It was shown in Sapir and Swadesh’s work that the word was used in a verb form, wherein it indicated that the gifts were freely given at a feast, as in ‘John Jackson potlatched (*p’achi?at*) a dollar for the house in which we were holding the feast’ (1955: 281, 283).

The word potlatch appeared to have been created and used by early European ethnographers and linguists. The nominalization of ‘gifting’ to ‘the potlatch’ was largely due to a cultural misunderstanding (Bracken 1997: 25). But the ascribed meaning of the word was closer to the modern idea of various social, economic, political ceremonies. The word potlatch evolved as Chinook jargon,<sup>1</sup> and it became a general classification that referred to every ceremonial form of the feasting in the Pacific Northwest tribes.

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<sup>1</sup> A nearly extinct pidgin trade language composed of elements from Chinook, Nootka, English, French, and other languages, formerly used in the Pacific Northwest (dictionary).

However, during pre-contact times each ceremonial occasion had a very specific name (Clutesi 1969:9; Atleo 2004:3).

Here, the study explored at the traditional functions of their communal feasts and ceremonies to see their cultural ideas of the community:

#### **4.2.1 Potlatch as Governing System**

As the potlatch was the central social custom of the Northwest-coast Indigenous groups, they accomplished many social purposes through it. One of the original purposes of the potlatch was the re-distribution and reciprocity of wealth. In this economy of a pre-capitalist society (Martin 2012:125), where the chiefs were the managers of the rivers, mountains, beaches and ocean, and anything produced or collected from them were subject to the chiefs' management. This social pattern persisted much longer among the Nuu-chah-nulth group, than other groups, where 'everybody in the village had to help their chiefs,' and it was 'something like nowadays we have to pay taxes to the government' (Drucker & Heizer 1967:36). The potlatch was the means through which they distributed useful commodities like dried foods, sugar, flour, or other material things like blankets, and sometimes money (Pidcocke 1965:244).

The redistribution of wealth was not merely a good intention of the chief, but a kind of debt clearing, or reciprocating of the credits earned for the commoners and slaves who worked for the chief and his family. An elder from Ahousaht talked about how reciprocity of kindness and support is an important value that the Nuu-chah-nulths share, 'It is important to give back to the people when people come to support you in different ways, and this can be done by being there for them at their time of need' (Swan 2016).

Although the potlatch was operated within the dynamics of their traditional hierarchies, the underpinning principle of the practice was reciprocity of kindness and support. The potlatch of the Nuu-chah-nulth was their social system under which all

people were cared for. Thus, their ideal community would be cherished by the people always.

#### **4.2.2 Potlatch as Social Maintenance**

The feast gatherings allowed the people to make exchanges and created social relations which help to maintain their community. The traditional potlatch was a way to secure marriage, names, property, rank, or a newly acquired chieftainship by allowing the event to be witnessed and recognized (Cole & Chaikin 1990:27). Each individual was born with an inherent right to use group privileges and properties of major or minor importance, and, in order to use these rights the formal announcement and validation of the title are still required, at the communal events (Drucker 1963:124). As their traditional social institution changed, large parts of their ceremonials became symbolic events that aimed to boost their cultural identity.

Furthermore, the potlatch was the occasion on which the people would celebrate a significant event of a person's life.<sup>2</sup> The celebration of births, rites of passages, wedding, funerals, naming, and honouring of the deceased were some of the many forms of the potlatch ceremonies. Although protocols would differ among many Indigenous nations, the common ceremonial features of the potlatch usually involve a feast, drumming, dancing, theatricality, and spiritual rituals. The ties among the tribal members was strengthened through the activities involving the feasts.

The potlatch was always a public event. Each feast had a purpose, form, ritual, boundary of the guests.

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<sup>2</sup> Usually, of higher rank.

### **4.2.3 Potlatch for Cultural Identity and Education**

As well, the potlatch was the place where they affirmed their cultural values and taught their young people their traditional values. The youth learned them usually by participation and observation. But verbal instructions were given to them occasionally. The potlatch was occurring more frequently over the recent years as families want to secure their tribal rights. Also, in effort to the revitalization of the culture, the potlatch was held for educating young Indigenous students about their own culture and history, and often non-Indigenous area students were invited to participate, learn, and grow (Winks 2010). A Nuu-chah-nulth elder shared her experience of attending potlatch as she was a child,

When potlatch ceremonies were happening, we were not allowed to run around we had to sit where mom was sitting because if you fall, we have to give money to the chiefs or the hosts. This is how we respected the host long ago. The men would sit on one side and the women and children on the other and we were not allowed to whisper or laugh because the host might think we are making fun of their party and might come and say you come and have a better feast. The potlatch is how we learned our language we would sit there watch and listen right from when we were small (Swan 2018).

Nuu-chah-nulth children were frequently exposed to their traditions and cultural events learning about them as they participated in the actual events.

### **4.2.4 Potlatch as Rivalry**

In the past, the hierarchies within and between tribes, villages, and peoples were established by the measure of how much wealth was given away, and dance performances, and other ceremonies at potlatch. The status of any family was raised not by who had the most wealth, but by who distributed the most. The excessive gift giving shown to white people resulted in the historic legal ban. The Chief of Kwakiutl tribe described the potlatch in his famous speech to the anthropologist Franz Boas:

We will dance when our laws command us to dance, and we will feast when our hearts desire to feast. Do we ask the white man, do as the Indian does? It is a strict law that bids us to dance. It is a strict law that bids us distribute our property among our friends and neighbours. It is a good law. Let the white man observe his law; we shall observe ours. And now, if you come to forbid us dance, be gone. If not, you will be welcome to us (Boas 1888:631).

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the wealth of the Northwest costal region expanded and the chiefs of lesser ranks began to potlatch (Codere & Kotschar 1950:97). The economic significance of this change was that the financing of the potlatch became an individual not a group enterprise. By the early 1880s, as historic records showed, this change was obvious to white observers (Codere & Kotschar 1950:97; Drucker & Heizer 1967:37). Sometimes a chief of lower rank had given a more prominent potlatch than his senior in rank had. At times, rivalries among chiefs and chief's families resulted in the tremendous growth of the amount of gifts that were shared at the feast (Drucker & Heizer 1967:35-52).

#### **4.2.5 Ban**

Potlatching was made illegal in Canada in 1885<sup>3</sup> and the United States in the late nineteenth century, largely at the urging of missionaries and government agents who considered it 'a worse than useless custom' that was seen as wasteful, unproductive which was not part of 'civilized' values (Cole & Chaikin 1990: 15). The tradition was mistranslated as 'wasteful gifts' resulted in halting of the traditional economic system (Bracken 1997: 220; Atleo 2005: 247). Hence, the potlatch was seen as a key target in assimilation policies and agendas (Crosby 1914: 12).

The ban, however, was repealed in 1951. The northwest-coast Indigenous people openly held potlatches to commit to the restoring of the traditional ways, but rarely as a redistribution of accumulated wealth. The redistribution of wealth now became an administrative task of the tribal councils. The fishery at each village operates the annual drive to deliver fish. Nuu-chah-nulth fishermen voluntarily deposit part of their catch for this purpose. The fish caught and collected by the ministry of tribal fishery were re-distributed to the tribal members as a current practice (Morrow 2017).

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<sup>3</sup> An Act further to amend *The Indian Act, 1880*, S.C. 1884 (47 Vict.), c. 27, s.3.

### 4.3 Traditional Feasts of Nuu-chah-nulth

The potlatch was facilitated and celebrated as an important social institution for the Nuu-chah-nulth people for a long time. The symbolic and implicit meaning of the ritual features had strong influence on the maintenance of the Nuu-chah-nulth society. Their identity and solidarity were made more explicit through these communal feasts.

In the past, the Nuu-chah-nulth feasts and ceremonies were indiscriminately categorized by forms, purposes, or size. The main purposes of these feasts were to determine by the occasions, such as transfer of chieftaincy, coming of age or puberty, naming of offspring, funeral and memorial, celebration of life, and other cultural events. George Clutesi, Nuu-chah-nulth writer, named four different forms of traditional Nuu-chah-nulth feasts (Clutesi 1969:9):

- (1) *He-nim-tsu*: guests were consisted of club members;
- (2) *Tlee-dtsoo*: included members of the home tribe;
- (3) *Hutch-yahk*: the host journeyed to another tribe to give a feast; and
- (4) *Tloo-qwah-nah*: guests were invited from any member of tribes, and its multiple feasts usually lasting for days.

The following section briefly explored the definitions and condition of each feast since their feasts were all lumped together under the potlatch, and it was helpful to understand certain characteristics of their traditional feasts.

#### 4.3.1 *He-nim-tsu*

'*He-nim-tsu*' was a family meal to celebrate a family event such as birthday feast or *yaaxmiil* (cleansing through brushing).<sup>4</sup> The preparation of their family meal was shared by all family members who reside in the same village. The Nuu-chah-nulth word '*He-ni-tsu (hiniic)*' (T'aat'aaqsapa Series 1991) meant 'to take something along with you' and was the word that Clutesi referred as '*He-nim-tsu*' (Clutesi 1969:9). *He-nim-tsu* was a feast similar to the English term 'potluck' in the American language which refers to 'food provided for an unexpected or uninvited guest, the luck of the pot' which appeared on the sixteenth century English work of Thomas Nash (Plautus 2005:100) or 'communal meal, where guests brought their own food' originated in the 1930s during the Depression (Martin 1933), or may be an eggcorn from potlatch and by extension of the traditional sense of luck of the pot.

#### 4.3.2 *Tlee-dtsoo*

*Tlee-dtsoo* meant a party for all. *Tlee-dtsoo* (*łiičuu*) meant 'person providing food at a feast' (T'aat'aaqsapa Series 1991). This meal was different from *He-nim-tsu*. At *Tlee-dtsoo*, all food was prepared by the hosting family or a group.<sup>5</sup> It was also the feast which includes all the members of the home tribe. A *tlee-dtsoo* feast was often organized by the band (village) office or the school in the tribal village for everyone (n.7). The same word was currently used in neighbouring tribes for the same meaning as it is a current practice among the tribes of the Pacific Northwest, that they borrow names and terms from one another (n.9).

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<sup>4</sup> *Yaaxmiil*. In Tseshaht dialect, it means 'to sweep' or 'to brush off' and refers to 'brushing off' ceremony.

<sup>5</sup> It is also denoted as *Cle-isch*, *giving feast to whole village*. (Ernst 1952:65)



Cultural borrowing was a common practice among the Indigenous tribes<sup>6</sup> since these groups progressed through different sequences of cultural contact and change. There seemed to have been a general pattern of cultural integration, especially around material and technological aspect of western culture, to assimilation. These shared processes and issues provided a basis for forming of pan-Indian identity (Champagne 2000:207). As time progressed, cultural borrowing became more fluid with the establishment of pan-Indian media and network.

#### **4.3.3 *Hutch-yahk***

*Hutch-yahk* meant a ‘gift visit.’ The *T’aat’aaqsapa* Nuu-chah-nulth dictionary (1991) did not list the word ‘*hutch-yahk*’ as Clutesi used it (Clutesi 1969:9). However, the word appeared in the original Nootka text (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:275),<sup>7</sup> as ‘*Hačʔyaak*,’ and translated as ‘visit’ (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:278). This ceremony was given to a family or a tribe by a group of other (visiting) family or tribe, to settle conflict between the two parties or to make intertribal marriage proposal.

#### **4.3.4 *Tloo-qwah-nah***

*Tloo-qwah-nah* (*ʔukʷaana*) was the wolf dance ritual (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991:133), which was covered in detail in the following chapter. As it used to happen in the winter, it was also called ‘winter dance.’ Traditionally, at the start of every winter, the secretive wolf dance society staged a week-long *tloo-qwah-nah* ceremony to initiate new members into the pack. Potlatches were given at all wolf dance that was performed at all subsequent in the rest of the season. The wolf dance continued to be featured in almost

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<sup>6</sup> ‘Tlee-dtsoo’ was referred to as their annual year-end school appreciation dinner at Salish Aboriginal Education Support Program of the lower interior mainland of British Columbia (Sechelt, BC).

<sup>7</sup> The Narrative titled, 58. Gift Visit to the Ucluelets, Ms. 50z, 35-45, by Tom, recorded by Alex Thomas, Dec. 1921.

all contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth feasts. Some earlier Western visitors called *Tloo-qwah-nah* (*ʔluk<sup>w</sup>aana*) ‘the Potlatch’ (McDowell 2012:149; Drucker 1951:366; Clutesi 1969:9-10) for its ornate ceremonial features and its significance in size and length (Clutesi 1969:10). The Nuu-chah-nulth, however, maintained that the distinct purpose of *Tloo-qwah-nah* as the initiation ritual for new wolf warriors for a long time. The gift-gifting (*pachitle*) occurred in every one of traditional feasts.

#### **4.4 Resurgence after Ban**

As it was aforementioned, the potlatch ban facilitated by amendment to the Indian Act, from 1885 to 1951. The nineteenth-century Europeans opposed the practice because they thought that the ceremony was ‘wasteful’ and lacked of ‘economic forethought’ (Kenyon 1980:159). Prohibitions against the potlatch were first included in the Indian Act of 1880. There were records of arrests in Southern Kwakiutl until 1921 (Drucker & Heizer 1967), but for the Nuu-chah-nulth, this legislation was never fully effective and they carried on the ceremonial tradition regardless (Atleo 2005:249). Though, a Nuu-chah-nulth elder pointed out the loss of the culture due to the potlatch ban, ‘Language and culture was removed from the Nuu-chah-nulth people through the banishment of the potlatch ceremony. As a result, the Nuu-chah-nulth faced community breakdown’ (Keitlah 2016).

The general decline of the potlatching occurred in the early part of twentieth-century as young people became more accustomed to Western civilization, through the Indian residential schools wherein Indigenous students were often punished for participating in any of their traditional ceremony. Contributing to this decline, also, was that the Nuu-chah-nulth groups had some success in commercial fishing in the 1940s which occupied much of their time causing a shift.

However, in the last 20 years there appeared to have been an increase of the potlatches as a movement towards seeking their cultural identity and interest in self-governing among Indigenous tribes has grown in Canada.<sup>8</sup>

In the resurgence of their traditional ceremony after the ban, the function of distributing wealth disappeared. The gift-giving remained but only as gifts honouring the guests. In the '60s, the sumptuous feast recorded by George Clutesi was written about since disappeared, leaving only today's modern traditional feast. (Clutesi 1969:9-11).

#### **4.5 Potlatch: Communal Process**

A remarkable feature in any Nuu-chah-nulth feast was their collaborated performance by the community. While the host and the host family of the ceremony was the nominal giver who provided most of the wealth and privileges to be used, almost every member of the community was involved in all stages of preparation, ceremony, and the aftermath of the event. The period of preparation was the time when all ties of kinship were encouraged to grow, expand, and extend beyond the mere security of relationship (Clutesi 1969:20).

A Nuu-chah-nulth band (village) worker in a northern village asserted:

Our potlatch is never a lonely or private event because everyone who knows that the (host) family including the whole village will come and help. That is the spirit of our ancestors and we are following our ancestors' way.<sup>9</sup>

The potlatch for the Nuu-chah-nulth was innately embedded as a tribal event. Since the community was a natural state for them, voluntary cooperation and participation were

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<sup>8</sup> The governments of Canada and British Columbia (BC), and many BC First Nations are negotiating modern treaties under the British Columbia treaty process. Treaties and Aboriginal Government - Negotiations West (formerly The Federal Treaty Negotiation Office) represents all Canadians and federal government departments and agencies in the negotiations.

By concluding treaties in BC, the parties seek to build new relationships with First Nations, achieve certainty over ownership and use and management of land and resources, and enhance economic opportunities for First Nations, British Columbians and all Canadians. (Government of Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada: <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100021023/1100100021027>, viewed on November 1, 2016).

<sup>9</sup> A band worker at Kyuquot First Nation.

automatically expected and practiced. Their communal cooperation was the fundamental physiology of the Nuu-chah-nulth community.

The importance of community had a significant influence on their life and cultural practices, but it was also profoundly linked to theological thoughts from which it has symbolically implied. This is because their cultural understanding of Christianity can be construed through their community orientation. This was discussed in the later section of the chapter with the case of a memorial potlatch.

#### **4.5.1 Gift Collection**

Additionally, the host of a traditional potlatch, usually a chief or a member of high rank, with his councillors, began to accumulate articles which were to give away. The collection of the articles could take as long as two years. The longhouse used for the feast ceremony was newly built for the same time. While the chief would collect articles for the gifts and the longhouse was being built, the family, local group, or confederacy, aided in the preparations for the performance and entertainments, and participated in all of its actual ceremonies and rituals. This long and detailed preparation process of the traditional days of the past shows how important this ceremony was to their community. This long, painstaking preparation informed how important the potlatch was considered on their community life and how much their lives have been centred around it.

More recent in contrast, the preparing potlatch became simpler: the hosting family, relatives and close friends raised financial resources to stage the feast, and the gifts given away were store-bought rather than crafted. The image of the potlatch focused in gift-giving as thought by the early European settlers and missionaries during the colonial period faded, and the focus now was revitalizing the identity of the community. The traditional practice was altered but the purpose remained.

#### **4.5.2 Participants of Potlatch**

The study discussed earlier in Chapter Three (3.5) that Nuu-chah-nulth society was an egalitarian society and the evidence of the character was seen here again, since all members of the tribe were allowed to participate in the event. For only those who were under an ongoing discipline and sanction, there could be restrictions on participation. But, principally no class<sup>10</sup> was excluded in the potlatch. Even slaves<sup>11</sup> could participate.<sup>12</sup>

#### **4.5.3 Social Stratification and Right**

The existence of the slave as a social class necessitated the discussion on the Nuu-chah-nulth social stratification. The social stratification in the traditional Nuu-chah-nulth society consisted of chiefs, commoners, and slaves. These stratifications were created by kinship proximity in the family lineage to the head chief. The elder sons in the ranked families remained in the rank of chiefs, and the later generations from the lines of younger sons were formalized as commoners and slaves. The head chief is the custodian of the family property which consists of hunting, fishing and gathering stations, fish-traps, houses, and canoes. All of the Nuu-chah-nulth territories was privately owned by certain chiefs. The ownership of chiefs, though, is not for their sole possession from which the chiefs are the only beneficiary but are viewed as being ‘responsible for looking after’ resources of land or sea for everyone.

Because the social classifications of the people mainly took place within the structure of their families, the relative relationship between slaves and ordinary people and those at the top strata shows much different aspect from the slavery system of Western colonial

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<sup>10</sup> There were classes of privileged, commoners, and slaves in the Nuu-chah-nulth society.

<sup>11</sup> Some slaves were obtained in war and might be sold from one tribe to another. Ransom by the kin of slaves could be done. The condition of their living was largely up to the temperament of the slave owner. Slaves and commoners worked for their masters and they both were allowed to attend or even participate in their feasts (Drucker 1951:272).

<sup>12</sup> In a personal conversation with an Ehatis informant, the Wolf Dances are strictly for men, since women are protected from dangerous activities.

history. The slaves they captured in tribal wars were usually absorbed in the structure of their families. Despite the different role of each individual, the basic rights for all members of the society were guaranteed. Here, the right to participate in the communal ceremony was the basic right for everyone.

In each sub-division (band or village unit), there was a rank and file of chiefs with different responsibilities to the community. Commoners were people who possessed nothing at all, and, slaves were the sole possessions of the chief, whose economic contribution was essential for emergence of wealthy family lines (Wike 1958:225). The chiefs received from his commoners a part of their catch which they gave as ‘help to the chief’ (Wike 1958:222). A large part of the foodstuffs given to the chiefs went directly back to the people in feasts as well as to other groups to elicit their good will. The grand chief interceded for the abundant food supply for his people.

In addition to his chiefly duties, the chiefs gave the rights to his supporters, names for their children, dances, and ceremonial roles. Group cooperation in the actual performance was essential for staging the affair (Drucker 1951: 366; Clutesi 1969: 15), and for this reason, a formal public announcement was the important first step and always preceded any preparation.

#### **4.5.4 Announcing Potlatch and Communal Consensus**

The strength of public opinion was recognized by all member of the tribe, and in order to receive the solid backing for the event, before they did anything, it was necessary to let the people of their community know the intent of the event. The recognition of public opinion was tacit, but everyone seems to agree with this rule. The announcement of intent for holding a potlatch was a very important and sensible aspect of social life of Nuu-chah-nulth. Even though the host of potlatch has enough wealth to finance the event, the rest of the community made up the crucial parts, and help was needed for songs and dances and the like. The community usually assented, as a village chief echoed that, ‘our people

come together when we prepare a feast or do a potlatch. Any potlatch is a sacred affair and no one in our community intentionally tampers with it.’<sup>13</sup>

In rare cases, when the community disapproved the event, they will try to dissuade him. But the host usually knew where he stood. The host staged an elaborate performance, in traditional announcement of an intertribal and large-scale potlatch. The announcement for a small feast was made in letting close relatives and friends to eat a meal and telling them of the intent. Families of low rank ordinarily included one or more of their house chiefs<sup>14</sup> at such gatherings. But the invitation announcement of a major feast was more formally made, as a band office worker articulated:

For small feasts, it is the family and extended family members who plan the event and they later communicate to the village. By the time the band office is officially informed, the whole village became aware of the intent. But we have big potlatches, like a rare event. The host and the traditional chief always prepare a feast for the family representatives and chiefs and officials from other villages, to announce the event.

For a big event, other tribes or divisions of his tribe or confederacy were formally invited. The host chief would give a feast to the leading tribal or confederacy chiefs. At the feast, the host staged an elaborate dance ritual to honour and to invite the guest tribes. In the traditional potlatch, the process of announcing and the invitation involved were more elaborated with dramatic performance and procedures.

As alluded in the previous chapter, every aspect of the life of the Nuu-chah-nulth was positioned within the extended kinship boundaries. Individuals' position and status were determined within the community, and all their individual and family events and ceremonies were performed by their community. This community-centred social structure was an absolute cultural position in their social lives.

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<sup>13</sup> From an interview with a Kyuquot Band worker.

<sup>14</sup> The chiefs in his closest family and relatives circle.

#### 4.6 *Tlaaqtuutla*: Memorial Potlatch

*Tlaaqtuutla* (memorial potlatch) was the traditional name for the memorial potlatch of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The purpose of *Tlaaqtuutla* generally stated by the Nuu-chah-nulth was to stop the sorrow of the family and relatives who have lost loved ones and to return them to a happy life, sometimes described as the ‘Drying of Tears’ which is the official slogan for the ceremony (*Ha-shilth-sa* 2017).<sup>15</sup>

A mortuary rite cycle of a person was not considered completed until a memorial potlatch was held. Nuu-chah-nulth memorial potlatch, unlike funeral, which focused mainly on the deceased, was an opportunity for the hosts to memorialize, honour, and pleased all of their departed. From the initial part of this ritual, when the hosts mourned all of their lineage ancestors, to the subsequent speeches in which their virtues were extolled, the recently deceased increasingly blended with his ancestors. At the climax of the ritual the deceased were sent to join his ancestors.

When a chief or a member of his family died, a headdress, as a burial marker, was placed on the grave. The immediate family members did not directly handle the dead body. A memorial ceremony with a potlatch was held four years after the burial. For the bones and ashes of the dead body was transfer to a box, the mortuary cycle was observed for the dead body to dismantle. A memorial potlatch was an opportunity to remunerate those handled the body at the funeral.

The scale of the memorial potlatch varied, it depended on the rank, status, and wealth of the family and his matrilineal kin.<sup>16</sup> A small feast was given to low-ranking lineages and houses to honour their dead, whereas the potlatch in memory of a chief or a family head, involved the entire village, plus many out-of-town guests.

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<sup>15</sup> *Tlaaqtuutla*, Drying of Tears, used in the official NTC newspaper, *Ha-shilth-sa*, in the place of the previously used ‘Memorial Potlatch.’

<sup>16</sup> I participated a memorial potlatch of a chiefly family in Ahousaht in 2004 which the ceremony lasted for three days and three nights.



Any death required the participation of patrilineal kin of the deceased who performed the funerary services and had to be publicly thanked, feasted, and remunerated. Some families that could not afford a sizable potlatch or were uncomfortable to give a small potlatch joined their family of higher rank when the latter memorialized their own dead relatives. It was important to have a memorial potlatch of the dead person because it not only completed the four-year mortuary cycle but honours the dead and the receiving community. In the past, a memorial potlatch was given only for chiefs and members of their family. For commoners, a small feast was held to thank people for their help with the funeral, soon after (Hoover & Museum 2000:132).

#### **4.7 Memorial Potlatch (*Tlaaqtuutla*) at Tsaxana**

A memorial potlatch took place at Tsaxana Reserve of the Mowachaht people on October 20<sup>th</sup> of 2012. This potlatch was one of many potlatches I have participated in person over the period from 1996 to 2014. I recorded the event and my observations of the event for the sake of the study. For more accurate analysis of the event, Luke Swan, an Ahousaht man and my long-time friend, translated and interpreted the steps of the ceremony from his Nuu-chah-nulth perspective. A detailed note of the event is listed as a primary data in the bibliography section as n.3.

##### **4.7.1 Public Announcement**

The public announcement of invitation, on the tribal newspaper, read as the following:

My daughters, Adrienne, Juanita, Roberta, Tracy and all my grandchildren would like to invite all our family and friends to the memorial potlatch for my late husband Brian Amos.

This announcement for the memorial potlatch was for the late Brian Amos. It was made by the matrilineal side of the family, his wife, in honour of his daughters and grandchildren. The memorial service was announced on *Ha-shilth-sa*, the tribal newspaper, and its website for the potential guests from all fourteen sub-divisions of the

Nuu-chah-nulth tribe and beyond the tribal boundaries. The late Brian Amos was a prominent Chief of the Hesquiaht sub-division. A memorial potlatch for a chief in his calibre extends the invitation to the outside of the tribal boundaries. So, this was a relatively large potlatch.

The memorial potlatch was in Gold River (Tsaxana) where the wife of the late Brian Amos came from. The matrilineal side of the family gave the potlatch as their tradition dictated.

Traditionally, *Tlaaqtuutla* (memorial potlatch) was held at the end of the four-year mortuary cycle. But, the time for recent memorial potlatch was chosen for convenience since the Nuu-chah-nulth people work in non-traditional jobs, and the expatriates were back home only during the summer. Also, modern potlatches were shortened due to the demands of modern life, as well as the commercialization of their workforces. Memorial potlatch for a prominent family can go for three days and nights.<sup>17</sup>

This event was recorded following the sequence of the ceremony. The core discussions emerged from this cultural event as it related to religious ideas of Nuu-chah-nulths. This section addressed the main research question, and other subsequent questions, proposed in Chapter One.

#### **4.7.2 *Tse'ka*: Official Beginning of Memorial**

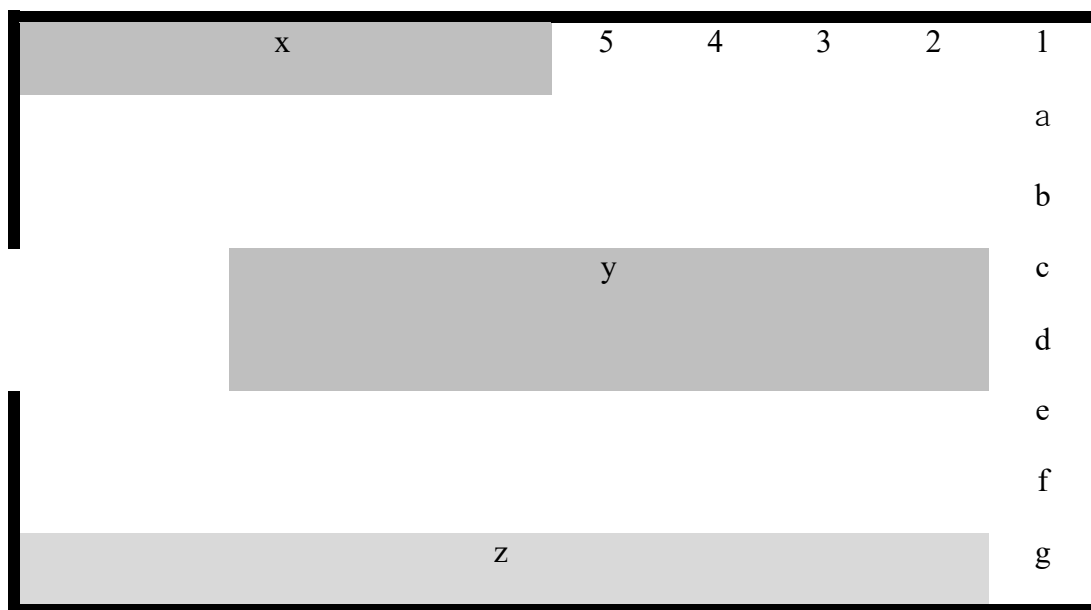
The spirit song, *Tse'ka*, was sung at the start of the potlatch, signifying the beginning and the mood of the event. The spirit songs were used to express grief. *Tse'ka* is a prayer (spirit) song, heavy and sombre, usually performed for solemn ceremonies. *Tse'ka* was performed in funerals, memorials, and *tloo-qwah-nah* (wolf rituals).

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<sup>17</sup> In the case of the Campbell family's memorial potlatch for their mother went for three days and nights in Ahousaht.

### 4.7.3 Seating Arrangements

Before the *Tse'ka* song was sung, everyone at the event, including the chiefs, elders, and special guests, was seated. Seating arrangements were an essential part of these ceremonies. Seating arrangements demonstrated the hierarchies and lineages of the society. The chiefs and elders were taken from their homes and escorted to the place of the potlatch, after everyone else arrived (Hoover & Museum 2000: 131). Some guests were seated at a special seat (*t'iquwit*) for the duties they perform at the potlatch (Hoover & Museum 2000: 132). In their tradition, each family had



1 – 5: High rank chiefs, a – g: Lower rank chiefs, x: Low rank chiefs, y: War chiefs, z: Commoners,

**Figure 3: Feast Seats (after Drucker 1951:261-262)**

their space to sit in the ceremonial longhouse. These arrangements were made according to proximity of relationship to the host family. The following diagram shows a traditional seating arrangement at the potlatch (Figure 3). The high-ranking chiefs were seated along the left side wall from the gate, the lower-ranking inside the wall facing the gate, the low-ranking also along the left wall from near the gate. The war chief and the chief's councils

sat in the middle of the house, and the commoners and women seated along the right-side wall. In most Indigenous community in Northwest, the traditions related to family privileges and properties were considered important. The seating arrangement was also a result of the family privileges.

#### **4.7.4 Feast**

Lunch feast was given after the *Tse'ka* song. A meal was an integral part of any communal/ religious ceremony. In the memorial ritual, the food was emblematically given to ancestors. The meal prepared for ancestors was very specific and elaborated. Tlingits also had a similar food ritual to serve the departed and ancestors in the mortuary rites (kaa naawú x'éix at duteex; N. Dauenhauer in Veniaminov 1984: 419).

The food served for lunch included: bread, ham sandwich, coffee, beef stew soup, and fish soup. Most food at the potlatch was ordinary Canadian food. The fish soup served was considered their traditional food. In the past, they used their traditional food, such as herring eggs, clams, abalone, black mussels, *hyish-toop* (chiton), *tee-tloop* (octopus), sea-cucumber, and so.

Food was served first to the elders. In any Nuu-chah-nulth event, the elders were their priority in serving. The master of the ceremony, a family member, announced that 'the elder should be served first' on purpose, for which provided an occasion to educate their children. As said before, public events were where they educate their young and pass down the traditions and values to them. An elder from a village in an interview said:

In traditional Indigenous societies, seniors have brought respect and leadership. The experience and knowledge of the elders are understood that the tribe has a resource that can be used to make decisions about the future. And while the Indigenous community has changed dramatically, this traditional role for the elders has been maintained in many communities.

The material aspect of their culture changed drastically, by the modern technology and the influence of Canadian-Western civilization, but the core values of Indigenous peoples still remained strong.

#### **4.7.5 Exoneration, Vindication, and Restoration by Community**

Briana<sup>18</sup> was among the women who served at the table. I was personally aware that she recently went through a series of mishaps and misfortunes as results of getting tangled with an irresponsible man with a history of illegal drugs and addictions. She would have been under communal sanction, and possibly her ceremonial participation rights would have been taken away. Usually, under those conditions, she could not have been serving at a communal event such as this memorial. To be allowed to serve at the potlatch table, she must have cleared the bad reputation and was reinstated as a regular member of her community.

The communal event like this one allowed for the community to assess the progress of troubled members and to reinstate them to community. Not to be allowed in the communal events was a considerably heavy punishment for the Nuu-chah-nulth people. Maintaining a reasonably right balance and harmony with the community was indicative of good membership, albeit tacitly acknowledged. The same process applied when allowing people to perform singing, dancing, or performing at a potlatch.

Moreover, personal conduct and behaviour were under examination for appropriateness and affirmation that individuals stand in proper relationship to all other members of the community. The community events became ways in which group of people come together not only to participate in their tradition but valorise the roles that individuals play within the group (Kidwell et al. 2004). This was one way of pursuing communal well-being.

The study found that the judicial function of their community related to the religious concept of Christianity. The law of their society was construed on the community's relation to an individual. The Christian idea of sin was understood through the relation

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<sup>18</sup> Pseudonym.

determined by the community. The limits of one's moral conduct to determine the thresholds of sin was similar to that of other human societies but the final decision was communal and situational. These standards and values were passed down to their community from the wisdom of their ancestors. Their elders' wisdom reflected their law. As a result, an individual's standing with the community was a yardstick to determine sin and restoration. The ultimate purpose of the Nuuchahnulth society was to keep balance and harmony. This concept provided a theological basis for understanding the concept of Christian holiness.

### **Sin, Balance, and Harmony**

Sin was a transgression of the will of God which constituted rebellion against him and an offence to his holiness (Escobar & Shenk 2007:362). In the Nuuchahnulth culture, a concept found to be close to the idea of sin was not being in harmony with everything, people, community, and environment, around them. It was compared with the western idea of sin which expressed in the concept of distance. The New Testament Greek word for sin is *ἁμαρτία* (hamartia) which literally meant missing the mark (Liddell et al. 1859), especially in spear throwing, whereas the Hebrew word *hata* (sin) originated in archery and literally referred to missing the 'gold' at the centre of a target (Pagels 2013:123).

Moreover, Christian repentance was understood as returning to the will of God, whereas the Nuuchahnulth, to repent meant to restore a proper balance.

Unusual circumstances of misfortune were followed after the spiritual balance was lost, or the ritual protocols were not properly executed. To have a bountiful harvest, a big catch of salmon, prosperous family life or any success were attributed to having a perfect and harmonious spiritual balance. To restore the lost balance, the Nuuchahnulths performed personal prayer rituals at a secret place at the river, *oo-sumch*, for four days. While they perform this prayer ritual, they received peace in their minds, experienced spiritual

presence, or acquired a specific revelation. The modern Nuu-chah-nulth incorporated this prayer ritual in their Christian practise without conflict.

In Chapter Three, the relationship of the Chief (*haw'ilth*) and the Day Box was explored, and the spray of the light (*n'aas*) at the end of the story symbolizes that all creation of the physical universe was but the fragment of the Creator. Receiving the light (*n'aas*) signifies receiving life for all creatures. The Nuu-chah-nulth strongly believes that every living thing shares the same life together and so is to be respected. In the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language, *heshook-ish tsawalk* denotes the notion that everyone is related to everyone, the natural world, events that happen to individuals, family, and friends, and the spiritual world. These relations influence one another and so are to be balanced in the right way.

### **Repentance**

Sin and repentance were a related topic in Christian theology. The idea of repentance and restitution led to the concept of justice in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture. As repentance and restitution were understood as part of restoration, the judicial sentiment of the Nuu-chah-nulth society differed significantly from Christian and Western tradition. The moral discourses of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture, as discussed in Chapter Six, could not be understood within the parameters of conventional, Western, religious understanding because their morality was not based on religion but on the dynamics of collective well-being of their community (6.5). In other words, their morality was relational. The Nuu-chah-nulth's morality was related to the balance and harmony of the community and was not consisted of the tenets of Western morality, although the results strived by the both cultures was the same: peace and harmony.

### **Restorative Justice**

This moral understanding goes beyond their ethical practices and applies to criminal offences. The Canadian justice system and Indigenous communities agreed upon the level

of criminal offences of Indigenous individuals that may be handled by the Indigenous community instead of being punished by the Canadian justice system (Johnson 2014:1-14). The elders of the community were the embodiment of the Indigenous justice system which arose from traditional peace-keeping processes that were in effect for thousands of years before the Euro-Canadian legal system was imposed on them. Traditionally, elders served the contemporary roles of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, juries and witness (Johnson 2014:2). Some offenders, instead of going to jail, went to an elder guided retreat. An elder guided retreat was a restorative justice remedy that placed the emphasis on healing the harms done by the offence and rehabilitating the offender to avoid future harms. Such processes were in line with traditional Indigenous views of justice (Justice Education Society 2016).

As fully restored, offenders were released into their community. When a moral failure or a criminal offence occurred in the Nuuchahnulth village, the community usually accepted it as their own failure and took up the restoration of the offender and the moral order of the community. Although the offenders and victims were the ones who suffered the pain the most, the community accepted the pain as well and the disrepute.

This collective disposition led to an important theological discussion. As the one who committed a crime did not take the blame and the punishment directly, the concept of individual substitutionary atonement was difficult to perceived. But, in the case of the Nuuchahnulth, the community became the agent of redemption. Thus, application of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement was challenging for the Nuuchahnulth Christian theology. Nevertheless, the ministry and the example of Christ were culturally mediated through the cultural ministry of the community. What Peelman would describe as Christic mystery (Peelman 2006:17) for Nuuchahnulth was found in their community. The Nuuchahnulth Christology was understood (found) in the community.



#### **4.7.6 Solidarity of Physical Presence for Others**

Notably their attitude about the community was in the concept of shared space. Being physically in the same space with others was important to them. Therefore, they regarded participation in all tribal events as important. The physical participation in tribal events expressed respect, consolation, and encouragement to the hosts. An elder from Kyuquot at the potlatch iterated that, her reasons for bearing a long and arduous journey to come to an event like this potlatch, she ‘came for a relationship,’ and that she knew the ‘people were the most important thing.’ ‘I think it’s worth the trouble and the money to get here.’<sup>19</sup> In their culture, being physically present at a family event like this outdid all other means of expressing sympathy and solidarity, such as sending a card or making a telephone call.<sup>20</sup>

### **4.8 Central Ritual**

Singing, dancing, and dining and socializing time were all important procedures of this memorial service, but several important aspects of the study emerged for its central rituals. The main goals for the Nuuchah-nulth memorial rite, as mentioned earlier, were, to complete the mortuary cycle of the dead, with blending the deceased and the living family toward ancestors, directing the deceased to join with ancestors, and ending to the pain or grievance of the living family and relatives.

#### **4.8.1 The Speech**

The songs chosen for the potlatch were sung. The family announced a list of songs, dances, and names to put away for the next four years in honour of the deceased. These songs are performed before and after The Speech. Then, a man who was the closest

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<sup>19</sup> Elder Christine Jules of Kyuquot

<sup>20</sup> From a personal conversation with Salina Frank of Ahousaht.

relative to the host family delivered The Speech in both the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language and English, as followed:

‘There will be no more tears’

‘He is amongst people now’

‘I relate to all Hesquiaht’

The speech provided key information about the Nuu-chah-nulth view of the dead person. The dead are ‘among people.’ The dead joined the rank of ‘people (*Quu?asa*).’ The Nuu-chah-nulth view of the person focused on the attributes that distinguished from a human being from a nonhuman. Nevertheless, without the immortal ancestral heritage passed down to them, the Nuu-chah-nulth person lacked the most critical dimension of their social identity. They believed, in a spiritual sense, that the deceased joined the rank of ancestors (*Quu?asa*). This meant that the deceased continue living on the tribal space.

At the speech, he said they didn't have to shed any more tears. He also told grieving family members and relatives that they could put an end to grief. He said the reason families can do so was because the deceased went back to his ancestors. The ancestors were the ancestors of Hesquiaht. This message was addressed to all the people of Hesquiaht.

What the meanings of this short speech conveyed were precise:

1. No more sorrows;
2. The deceased joins their ancestors; and,
3. Importantly, the ancestors they meant were the ancestors in the dead person's tribe to which the deceased belonged. In this case, it is the ancestor (*Quu?asa*) of the Hesquiaht tribe.

#### **4.8.1.1 Tlingit Concept of *Shagóon***

Among the tribes of the Northwest Indigenous peoples, certain groups had a similar notion about the destiny of the dead. The Tlingit of Alaska shared a similar view of their dead with the Nuu-chah-nulth. They had the belief in reincarnation and immortality, and the hope of meeting one's departed relatives again. Most importantly, a dying person could expect not to be forgotten, to live on as part of his group's *shagóon*, since his name, regalia, and other attributes of social identity would be perpetuated by his living family (Kan 1989: 123).

The anthropologist Sergei Kan observed that the ideas of *shagóon*, a very complex notion, signified individual tribal group's 'ancestor, heritage, origin, and destiny' (1989: 64). The study found that the Tlingit concept of *shagóon* was proximate to the Nuu-chah-nulth idea of *Quu?asa*. The evidence of these homologous ideas proved that this idea was pervasive in Northwest. The ideas of *Quu?asa* were further discussed in the next section.

#### **4.8.2 *Quu?asa* - Ancestors, Personhood, and Place**

Nuu-chah-nulths believed that the special status of personhood was granted at the end of life. It was called '*Quu?asa*.' The dictionary meaning of the word *Quu?asa* was 'real people,' also referring to 'Nuu-chah-nulth people.' Nevertheless, the word also had a few additional cultural meanings. The word *Quu?asa* culturally meant 'the identity of ancestors' as well as 'the place of their ancestors.' The Nuu-chah-nulth had an idea that when a person died, he or she returned to *Quu?asa*, the place of ancestors, and joins the rank of ancestors. The multiple meanings of *Quu?asa* related to a complex concept of *Quu?asa*: it was their origin, identity, and destiny.

It was the traditional belief that there was no substantial existential gap between the dead and the living, and the dead influenced the living. Nuu-chah-nulth people took it seriously when a dead ancestor appeared in a dream and the purpose of their visit was to help and to guide the living offspring. This belief supported the fact of the belief that their

ancestors and the living descendants lived in a space. This belief was consistent with their worldview: the spiritual world and the physical world were interwoven, as studied in Chapter Three.

The Speech was directed to the people of Hesquiaht because it was important to distinguish the Hesquiaht from all others since the late Brian Amos was in the lineage of Hesquiaht. The phrase ‘amongst people now’ meant that the joining his ancestors was done. However, the part ‘relate to all Hesquiaht’ emphasized that it concerned with the family and relatives of Hesquiaht. It was comforting for the family to know that the deceased has joined ancestors, completed his personhood, *Quu?asa*.

Here, this idea found the parallel concept of a biblical definition of destiny of the dead. Throughout the Old Testament, the expression ‘returns to one’s ancestors’ was used in many places. The OT Hebrew culture, which is a cultural background of Christianity, describes that the dead will return to their ancestors when he or she dies (BenAmi 1998: 13). The same belief identified with the Nuu-chah-nulth belief of returning to ancestors (*Quu?asa*) at the end of life.

To return to one's ancestors was to achieve complete personhood, achieving a complete cycle of being human and being restored to an unbroken human form. Correspondingly in the New Testament, the same concept and image were described in the NT passage, all ancestors gathered in a place, as ‘the great cloud of witnesses in heaven’ are watching at and cheering for their living descendants (Hebrews 12:1). The concept of *Quu?asa*, as a place, constituted the Christian doctrine of ‘heaven.’

The common picture of heaven or eternal life that Christians in the West was construed as the destination of all believers, a place and state of utter bliss in the immediate presence of the Lord. This picture, however, was not so harmonised for the Nuu-chah-nulth Christians whose ancestral culture attune them to the nearness and reality of the unseen world.

In the biblical texts, heaven was implied as what is above and beyond the earth (e.g. Gen. 1.1, Ps. 19.1), bearing testimony to the glory of God. It is the eternal dwelling place of God (e.g. Deut. 26.15, Matt. 6.9). The NT books described the ‘kingdom of heaven’ which could mean God himself. It was commonly referred to as a place to which the resurrected bodies will be raised. Some texts in the NT indicated that the believers already had the eternal life as a gift (John 3.16, Col.3.1) through the redemptive work of Christ, which brought ‘life in all its fullness’ (Escobar & Shenk 2007:146).

As well, eternity was understood as a linear time concept and, thus, the idea of immortality gave fear of death that ended in life. If Christian salvation meant salvation for the blessings of eternal life and from the fear of death, the concept of the time of the Nuuchahnulth people missed this concept. It helped to understand that eternal life to be a quality, rather than a concept of time, for the Nuuchahnulth.

The eternal life was also something that they already had in their worldview and they dreamed of living forever in their communities with ancestors. The linguistic idea of *Quu?asa* (real person), in *T’aat’aaqsapa* language, referred to ‘whole human,’ while the same word was also used to describe ‘ancestors,’ This implied that the Nuuchahnulth personhood was imperfect until they reached the status of *Quu?asa* (whole person) as joining their ancestors. The Christian eternity was perceived in this way, as involved in the circle of the Nuuchahnulth personhood.

#### ***4.8.2.1 Philosophical Concept of Quu?asa***

Nuuchahnulths believed in a unique philosophical concept. The Nuuchahnulth word *Quu?asa* meant ‘a native (Indigenous) person’ (*T’aat’aaqsapa* 137). The ordinary (cultural) use of the word by the Nuuchahnulth indicated that it had meanings: ancestor(s), whole (perfect) person, and a Nuuchahnulth person. This constituted the idea of the Nuuchahnulth personhood. The current state of a Nuuchahnulth person was *Quu?asa* (people). They became *Quu?asa* (whole person), as he or she returns to *Quu?asa*

(their ancestors). This idea was implied in The Speech (4.8.1). Hence, the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood was understood in the concept of *Quu?asa*.

### ***Quu?asa as Spatial Concept***

However, *Quu?asa* was not to be understood in a place in the distance, as in the lyrics of a song, ‘Somewhere, over the rainbow’ but as an immediate spatial concept, the tribal space. The complex concepts of *Quu?asa* mostly came from the spatial orientation of their worldview.

It might be in line with the biblical concept of the kingdom of God. Jesus stated the kingdom not only ‘has come near,’ referring to the proximity in space, but also ‘is at hand’ (Matthew 3: 2). The idea of *Quu?asa* adds the spatial understanding of the Kingdom of God. *Quu?asa* was not found in an untraceable time of a distant past but the immediate presence and space.

### ***Quu?asa in relation to Ha’wilth N’aas***

The Structurist theory of culture (Levi-Strauss 1963) served to explain that the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of an ultimate being found in the concept and the relationship they had in *Quu?asa*. The chieftaincy and the family ancestry were closely related as they pointed back to their ancestors. The Nuu-chah-nulth chieftaincy derived from their understanding and attitude toward their ancestors. On the other hand, the Cultural Relativist theory (Boas 1949) explained the way the Nuu-chah-nulth decided to tell their origin myths (Boas 1935: v). The Christian narrative had a significant influence on the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of the Creator. But it was the Nuu-chah-nulths who appropriated the idea of the ultimate Chief *Ha’wilth N’aas* as the Creator.

#### ***4.8.2.2 Ancestor Veneration***

Since the Nuu-chah-nulth person’s identity was closely linked to ancestors, the study explores to learn how the topic related to the notion of ‘ancestor veneration.’ The

reverence of ancestors was the term coined to explain this prevalent cultural practice in human society (Jones, ed. 2005: 8033). Herbert Spencer in his social Darwinist frame of thinking concluded that the rudimentary form of all religion was the propitiation of dead ancestors, who were supposed to be still existing, and to be capable of working good and evil to their descendants (Spencer 1870: 535-550). However, in Chapter Three, Spencer's theory was repudiated, because God expressed as 'ancestor,' or great-great-grandfather or great-Chief in their narratives or their cultural idea were only a symbolic representation of a creator-deity, and thus, Indigenous religious idea relates ancestors was not merely a primitive form of religion. Therefore, the old social Darwinist theory about Indigenous religion did not properly view the cultural-religious idea of the people in the Northwest.

However, the practice of ancestor veneration was known to be prevalent in Asia. The practice was based on love and respect for the deceased instead of pointing to a philosophical concept toward the idea of God. The fact that Confucian idea of ancestors' worship was toward worshipping immediate, familiar ancestors; deceased father and mother and the grandparents, indicated actual veneration of ancestors. Ancestor veneration generally relates to the belief that the dead continue living and possess the ability to influence the fortune of the living. Particularly in the Korean tradition, it is a domestic duty to venerate their direct, familial ancestors (Janelli 1992; C.W. Park 2010: 12-13). Certain sects and religions, especially the Roman Catholic Church, venerate saints as intercessors with God, as well as pray for departed souls in Purgatory. Often the goal of ancestor veneration is to ensure the ancestors' continued well-being and positive disposition towards the living and to ask for special favours or assistance.

However, the ideas linked to ancestors in Nuu-chah-nulth thought world was related to the spatial concept of a common space that they shared with ancestors. The Nuu-chah-nulth lived in constant presence of their ancestors in the living space *Quu?asa*. The ancestors communicated in dreams, visions, and through their environment to living families, helping them make important decisions in life.

In comparing the Nuu-chah-nulth society with the Confucian society found similar social customs and regulations. The function of the Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs was the role of the eldest son of the family clan system. The Indigenous culture of Northwest shares a similar clan system with Northeast Asia (Boas 19003; Cole 2001). The neo-Confucian Korean society placed the utmost importance on the hierarchy between classes, older and younger people, emphasized family values, keeping of order and harmony. Their rituals were meaningful ceremonies paying respect to one's ancestors (Seth 2010:157-158). Ancestral veneration was an essential ritual in the system.

A lengthy observation of the memorial customs of the Nuu-chah-nulth birthed a conjecture that the hierarchy of the Nuu-chah-nulth societies continues even in ancestral space. As prominent chiefs died and returned to ancestors, their memorial potlatch was held in considerable measure and honour. Thus, their influences on living relatives were thought to be greater.

#### **4.8.3 Family Curtain: Canon of Sacred Legends**

As the memorial ritual continued at Tsaxana, the family curtain was drawn across the length of the stage as the backdrop of the ceremony. They cleared the space in the middle of the hall as the stage for the next phase of the event. As the curtain was drawn, the wellness workers (traditionally, medicine men) sang a prayer chant (*Tse'ka*) with rattles that signified the sacredness of the curtain. There reserved a chant song for this purpose – sort of crying chant (*ʔibʔyak*) (Hoover & Museum 2000:132). The family curtains were the canon of the sacred family legends and used in the sacred ceremonies that display family rights and privileges. The family curtains contained the drawings depicted sacred hero legends of chiefly families. Chiefly families were the ones who own the family curtains. The curtains were made on a large piece of white cloth or canvas with painted designs that represent various mythological creatures and family names, all connected



through family stories (Goodman 2003:290). The family curtains were revered as sacred ceremonial objects as much as their family legends were.

When the curtains were used, the elder at the highest ceremonial rank, who was a fluent Nuu-chah-nulth speaker, retold the revered stories which the curtains represent. The legends were told in the Nuu-chah-nulth language. Retelling their tribal stories reaffirmed and strengthened their group identity with the lineage of their ancestors.

#### **4.8.3.1 *Witwat***

Then, the chief, with a man on each side of him started singing. These men were called ‘*witwat*’. Traditionally, *witwats* were the men who carried out the orders of the chief, like reinforcement officers. But the memorial ceremony had their roles, beside keeping the order, to add symbolic reverence to the memorial ceremony.

#### **4.8.4 Cleansing Ritual: *Yaaxyax<sup>w</sup>a***

Cleansing was an important ritual that they used in sacred ceremony. The cleaning rituals itself symbolically brought the sacredness. Therefore, a wellness worker cleaned the stage floor, with cedar branches, while others played rattles in the background. Drums were used for singing and dancing. Rattles are used for prayers and spiritual rituals. They cleansed the floor where the next ceremony took place. According to the cultural interpreter, Luke Swan, the purpose of the cleansing was, ‘so nothing bad will happen.’ They understood that the cleansing rite repelled all evils could cause harms.

As it was a fundament rite of all religions, Christianity recognizes baptism to be the rite that cleanses one's sin before God in its effect. This cleansing ritual was called *yaaxyax<sup>w</sup>a* traditionally and called now ‘the cleansing of the floor.’ The cleansing was for the preparation of the next step, the ceremony of letting go, of the grief for the family.

Linus and his two sons, wearing spruce (*tuuhmapt*) branches on their heads and down feathers on their hands, cleansed the ceremonial ground (stage) and performed the *Yaht-*

*yahtsa* (*yaaxyaax<sup>wa</sup>*). The culture workers circled around in front of the curtain, dropping eagle down in each corner. This was repeated four times. When this was over, they swept the down towards the door with bigger spruce branches. They would sweep the down towards the door or where the sun rises (Hoover & Museum 2000:132).

#### ***4.8.4.1 Eagle Down and Feather***

Nuu-chah-nulth generally believed that immortality was the sign of spiritual strength. They considered eagle downs and feathers as a sacred object. Eagle feathers were thought to be a symbol for immortality because they remained unchanged for a long time. Eagle feathers were used as their ceremonial objects in a chief's regalia or a baton of command for drummer-singers. The leader conducted the singers with a sheaf of eagle feathers.

#### ***4.8.4.2 Culture worker (Medicine Men)***

The cleansing ritual was done by the priest in Nuuchah-nulth. The Nuuchah-nulth priests were now called 'wellness worker', or 'culture worker.' Hesquiaht was one of 14 sub-tribes of the Nuuchah-nulth, and the Lukas family took the role of a culture worker for the village. Linus Lukas, the elder, was recognized as a culture worker after coming back from a serious illness and terminal health condition and having spiritual dreams and visions (n.9). They believed that getting close to death and returning to health without dying would bring spiritual gifts. Linus returned from an illness almost took away his life and was recognized by the community that he had a spiritual gift.

The position of the Nuuchah-nulth culture workers did not constitute a full-time position, somewhat different from other tribal cultures depicted them as medicine men or shamans. But they live with ordinary jobs but used their gift as healers or spiritual intermediaries when their gifts were needed. But it is important to note that the status was given by the community and it assumed an essential function.

#### 4.8.4.3 *Grandpa and Grandma, Medicine Men, Wellness Workers*

However, an interview data from an Ehatisaht elder also told that the ritual of brushing was also performed by a chief in the extended family or by someone, as an Ehatis elder in a family who had the knowledge of doing it. Only when it was appropriate or requested, a spiritual worker<sup>21</sup> from the village performed it. Their villages usually had at least one culture worker.

Nevertheless, severe situations required serious spiritual performance. So, they understood that even an ordinary looking culture worker was not undermined and believed to have a shamanic power required from his near-death experience.

In the past, Drucker gathered that shaman's career was construed as one of expedient means for persons of low rank to attain an honoured place in society, from the fact that all shamans he encountered were persons of low rank (Drucker 1951:181). Father Brabant, a Roman Catholic missionary who faced strong opposition to his works among Nuu-chah-nulth, described Nuu-chah-nulth shamans 'cold-blooded frauds' who 'deliberately preyed' on the gullibility of the ignorant, possibly as an opposition of a rival (Drucker 1951:181). An earlier study of Indigenous shamanism concluded that the shamans were recruited from the rank of psychologically unstable, epileptic and psychotic.

However, Drucker also noted that most of the Nuu-chah-nulth 'shamans' seem to have been mature individuals, with an above-average intelligence which enabled them to learn from experience (Drucker 1951:182). Generally, Nuu-chah-nulths often understood them as 'caring grandfathers with the gift of healing.'

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<sup>21</sup> Traditionally called 'medicine man' or 'grandfather and grandmother (Stan Matthew, *Quu?asa* Coordinator). The current Nuu-chah-nulth term for the person who does these kinds of healing performances is a 'cultural worker' or 'wellness worker (*Quu?asa* Program)'.

### ***Tuuxhmapt* - Canadian Spruce**

The ritual object used in the brushing performance was slender branches of Canadian Spruce (*tuuxhmapt*), which they believed to be a ‘very powerful medicine.’ But they were not referring it to the spruce branches but the ritual itself.

The brushing is much alive and practised in a more organized fashion. NTC recently established a tribe-wide traditional healing programme, The *Quu?asa* (whole person) Programme. The *Quu?asa* Program is Nuuchahnulth traditional healing program, as its mission statement states:

To respectfully support the Nuuchahnulth Nations to achieve their full spiritual, mental, emotional and physical potential, so families can once again exercise full responsibility of the nurturing of all members, and communities are once again healthy and self-governing.<sup>22</sup>

The current *Quu?asa* Program focuses on the healing of those who survived residential schools going through the mental, emotional, physical and sexual abuse at their residential schools during the colonial and confederation periods. They offer former residential school students and their families counselling, cultural support, resource material, assistance with accessing elder, traditional, emotional support and treatment programmes.

Cultural support was their cultural means to help people heal. The brushing ritual (*yax-ma-thlit*) was often used as their own traditional healing remedy or medicine in a healing circle. They also used ‘smudging’ and ‘sweat lodge’ which were borrowed remedies from interior Indigenous tribes. In their organized healing circles culture workers facilitated and performed brushing rituals as they are the ones who have deeper knowledge of the spirit world.

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<sup>22</sup> *Quu?asa* Program’s Mission Statement ([www.nuuchahnulth.org.tribal-council/quuusa.html](http://www.nuuchahnulth.org.tribal-council/quuusa.html))

#### 4.8.4.4 *Nuu-chah-nulth Priesthood*

Furthermore, the study explored whether the Nuu-chah-nulth practiced the office of priesthood or priestly function any time in the past history. Drucker noted that Nuu-chah-nulth priesthood possibly developed from the practice of lengthy ritual prayers for their annual season of fishing and hunting (Drucker 1963:142). The Nuu-chah-nulth chiefs ritually cleansed themselves and performed ceremonies as part of the chiefly duties toward the people. Atleo wrote that the Nuu-chah-nulth developed a sophisticated protocol for as important duties such as whaling (Atleo 2004:x). Priestly duties were performed in their communal events such as a funeral, memorial, and religious services. But the characteristics of the duties they performed at these ceremonies were more of cultural rather than religious. Again, the culture and religion were almost synonymous and practiced without separation.

Nuu-chah-nulths generally believed that the control over the fortune, or fate, of an individual, depended on their spiritual strength granted by the Creator (*N'aas*). Such strength from *N'aas* was won after attending an arduous search, in fasting, cleansing and prayer through prayer bathing *oo-sumch*. The ritual of cleansing was preceded by bathing often in icy ocean, or scrubbing the body with bundles of cedar bark strips.<sup>23</sup> The spiritual search was also seen in the Sun Dance of the Interior British Columbia or the Canadian Prairies in which an individual was tied to a pole by piercing his chests with animal teeth, and danced for four days under the sun.<sup>24</sup> Those who encountered a particular spirit, who allowed himself to be subjugated if the quester was properly purified, and thenceforth served as a guardian spirit, often became medicine men.<sup>25</sup> In the Bible, phrases such as fasting and praying often showed the ability to chase away ghosts. Here fasting and prayer

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<sup>23</sup> From a personal conversation with Barrie Titian, an Ahousaht resident.

<sup>24</sup> From a personal conversation with the Ahousaht elder and medicine man, Louie Joseph.

<sup>25</sup> From the same conversation with Louie Joseph.

included a sign of intense effort (Mark 9: 29, KJV). The religious universality of intense effort has been implied that through effort, people in the physical world can reach the spiritual world or receive spiritual ability there. And this spiritual knowledge was also allowed in cultural understanding among those who believed in the New Testament or Christian faith. This was also found in the worldview of the Nuu-chah-nulth people in the study of origin myths (Chapter Three).

Natural cause was recognized for many diseases, especially physically curable ones; but others such as near-death accidents, psychological illnesses, or an incurable disease, were commonly believed to be the result of the intrusion of malevolent spirits into the body. The medicine man or healer's treatment of such diseases was dictated by his tutelary spirit but usually consisted of brushing the disease agent off the body, with a spruce branch or an eagle's feather, with dramatic gestures.<sup>26</sup> The dramatic gestures were an integral part of medicine.

#### **4.8.5 Communal Prayer Chant**

As the memorial potlatch continued, the ritual of *Yaht-yahtsa* (*yaaxyaax<sup>w</sup>a*) was performed on the cleansed ground. It was a long and loud chant, went for about 10 to 15 minutes, accompanied with the full-strength drumming and rattling. The singers and drummers behind the family curtain had a board in front of them to beat on. As the Lukas, the culture workers, chanted, the singers and drummers pounded on boards. The beat started with four beats and then faster. Everyone in the potlatch stood up, raised their hands, and chanted along.

In the meanwhile, the drummers pounded with a fast beat and saying '*huu-huu-huu-hu*' and finally ended with a sigh of relief – with a '*hee*'. The chanting contained the pain

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<sup>26</sup> Observed and gathered sources from the funeral of a daughter of a family in Kyuquot in May 19, 2010 in which I participated.

of letting the memory of the deceased one leave and inviting balance, according to the interpreter. The music and the chant became louder to a climax. When the chant stopped, the culture worker informed (whispered to) a family elder that ‘something had happened.’

This chanting was common in the Nuuchahnulth spiritual ceremony. It was included in the rituals of their funerals and memorials. I have seen this kind of chanting used in funerals. The chant was used as they ‘sent the spirit to the other side.’ Often in the funeral ceremony, they brought out ‘wolf’ in place of the power chant. Wolf represents the power to take ‘the passed-on chief to the other side’ because they feel that the ‘wolf is very powerful.’<sup>27</sup> The Nuuchahnulths believed that they lived in the world that had two sides, the spiritual and material sides, coexist in their living space. But to reach ‘the other side,’<sup>28</sup> again, they must do it with an intense effort. This idea of Nuuchahnulth worldview was discussed in Chapter Three.

#### **4.8.6 Pronouncement**

When the long chanting finished, an Amos family elder introduced, in their native language, as the (immediate) family members of the late Brian Amos were called on the stage. The elder took the opportunity to explain and educate about why the cleansing ceremony was done a few minutes ago before the chant. Then, He announced that:

‘He came to tell us that’

‘No more walking on earth,’

‘No more tears coming out from you’

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<sup>27</sup> An Ehatis informant described the Wolf used in the funeral.

<sup>28</sup> The expression is consistently used by most Nuuchahnulth people.

The deceased man who joined his ancestors now came to tell his family that he was no longer part of the physical side and that the people could stop their grief. This announcement completed the official memorial rite. Now he has gone to a position where he stays in a spiritual place to talk to his bereaved family and guide them with wisdom. This was how Nuu-chah-nulth understood the immortality of their people. The immortality was in the belief of the communality.

On stage, four security-workers, *witwat*, were hired to keep safety. Although these men were hired to assume the role of the security guard, this too was a part of the ceremony. While everyone participated in the climactic chant, the Witwats were symbolically vigilant. The *Witwats*' presence added air of religious seriousness and reverence to the ceremony.

When the ordinary society changed to a religious function, no professional religious figures were introduced but the religious functions assumed in Nuu-chah-nulth. The special resourcefulness demonstrated that their religion was natural part of their culture. They did not see the need to differentiate between culture and religion. Perhaps, it is the reason why Christian missionaries had difficulty seeing the evidence of the Christian religion in them.

#### ***4.8.6.1 Returned Happiness***

Finally, the drummers and singers moved behind the Family Curtain, to make more space for dancers. A female dancer came on the stage and performed a dance performance in a much brighter choreographs and entertained the audience as the crowd cheered. This dance signified the returned happiness. The culture workers prepared the singers with the prayer of blessings because from this time on the singers and drummers had to perform for long hours. The dance continued the rest of the afternoon, until the dinner was served. Young women dancers wearing shawls embraided the traditional designs danced happily.



## **Payments**

In between the dances, money envelopes were handed to the tribesmen and elders to thank them. All participants in the ceremony were paid as courtesy of the hosting family. The payments to the tribesmen were paid to cover their travelling cost, which they did not have to. Special gifts were presented to the chiefs and people who helped at the funeral. They always expressed their respect for their hard work with material gifts or money. This stems from the spirit of their reciprocity rather than from their economic consciousness, as discussed in in the section 5.4.3.

Traditionally, generous gifts, according to the descriptions of the last traditional potlatch held in Tseshah (Clutesi 1969), such as canoes, paddles or anything of value were given. In some cases, gifts were given generously that they emptied out their belongings in the house. The idea of their gift-giving was showing no favouritism for the guests and the gifts were evenly distributed (Hoover & Museum 2000:132).

From the historical account of John Jewitt (Jewitt 1824), the chief Maquinna and his councils distributed the patrons what they spoiled from the ship Boston to the chiefs and their families according to their social ranks at the potlatch. But this was a special occasion for his son's first *tloo-qwah-nah* and Maquinna gave out ravished gifts, mostly Western goods, 'no less than 100 muskets, the same number of looking-glasses, 400 yards of cloth, and 20 casks of powder, besides other things.'

The gifts at the memorial ceremony had a few impressive gifts given to the special guests. For the modern potlatches, however, the gift-giving remained but as a symbolic tradition.

## **Dance Celebrations**

The happy ending of the memorial potlatch tapered off with a long procession of wolf dances brought by the neighbouring tribes. They performed their dances continuously, one after another. Luke Swan told that the Nuuchahnulth believed that wolves were 'protectors and so wolf dancers wear a headdress of the wolf.' These headdresses were

called '*Hinkeets*.' The wolf dance was a dramatic dance performance. Each tribe and chief have their own version of choreography with slight variations.

### **Respecting Family Privileges**

A matriarch, who represented the village who owned the song borrowed from the last Chief Earl George, addressed the host family in the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language. She acknowledged and paid a gift of money to the family of the late Chief Earl George. Earl was a close friend and respected by the host family. The display of family privileges was incorporated into the potlatch ceremonies, in a manner well scripted. The use of the exacting traditional procedures was the key element to make the ceremony more authentic in cultural way. They knew when to use their ceremonial tradition language in their ceremonies.

More gifts were handed out. Among these gifts was a gift to New Horizon, a non-profit society who served the family with Alzheimer disease. The special gift was given for the apparent helps that the Amos family received from the organization. A gorgeous looking traditional mask was presented to this society. The family paid the respect to them.

### ***Isaak* (Respect)**

The closest English word to *Isaak* is respect. The Nuu-chah-nulth society valued and practised paying respect to where it was due. Also, they always expressed their appreciations in a tangible way and acknowledged them in public. Tangible expressions often compared to showing respect in the general Canadian society, as the special esteem or consideration in which one holds for another person. The appreciation was rarely shown without a gift.

Furthermore, the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of respect was not understood as to the idea of that being highest achieving or the most outstanding performance, but anyone could be the recipient of respect. For an incident, my two teenage children were helping at an annual culture camp where a team of us helped organized with Ahousaht Holistic Centre.

At the final assembly of the camp my two children were asked on the stage by a group of elders, to be acknowledged and given beautiful traditional blankets. They had gone through some recent hardships but nonetheless showed their courage in coming and helping at the camp (n.10). The Nuu-chah-nulth people understood that everything was interconnected and, thus, had to be respected.

### **Ending of Memorial Potlatch**

They took breaks as the people with diabetes were served with fresh juice and a basket of non-sugary snacks. Kindness was displayed, especially to the weak and the elderly. The group from the Clayoquot village performed singing a prayer chant. Luke Swan the cultural interpreter said that the tradition of the other tribes performing their songs and dances were ‘to pay respect and give the family their support.’ He also told me that the hosts of the potlatches do not make prior arrangements with the visiting performers. They brought their performances voluntarily, out of goodwill.

The wolf dance from Clayoquot was distinctively choreographed. Wolf Dance was addressed to their chief and each village had some variation in the regalia and choreography.

A group of ladies performed the Sun and Moon Dance. They danced with attractively decorated shawls. They gave their best performance with a display of high energy and zeal which demonstrated their willingness and kindness to offer support to the hosts. Their dance routines were repetitious and exhausting, but they performed with seriousness, not minding the physically exhausting performance.

As the performance of dances went on, the audience sat for 3 or 4 hours watching the dances firmly planted in their seats but still bouncing their feet to the rhythm. They were exuberant in supporting the host and cheering for the performers. Then, a relatively larger-scale wolf dance group consisted mostly of youth performed. They had four *Hinkeets* (wolf masks) instead of the usual two. The modern dance moves were visibly

noticed. The group exhibited an obvious sign of change in culture, as the Nuu-chah-nulth were on creating and inventing their tradition.

The guests from the Clayoquot village presented a gift to the host, a decorative blanket with a sophisticated Indigenous artwork hand-embroidered. The gifts were usually given from the host to the guests. But these gifts were given to the host in a very respectful manner. A Mowachaht elder frequently gave thanksgiving remarks for the guest performers. At one point, a group of guests in their seating area stood up towards the Amos family and uttered the supporting words one by one exchanging thanksgiving remarks with the host. Before the dinner was served, spontaneous thanksgiving songs broke out from different corners of the hall, like the cheering teams at sporting events. Everyone joined songs and dances.

While the dinner was served, spontaneous songs broke out creating a party atmosphere. The festive spirit did not subside, showing the strength of their community. It seemed everyone was relishing all at the occasion. Everyone at the potlatch cheered and laughed with others as if they had truly forgotten the grief and embraced returned happiness. This gave a snapshot of the eternal feast of the 'heaven' or '*Quu?asa*.' As the host people of the Mowachaht finished the finale performance, the people were finally given permission to disperse. In some potlatches, the dance procession of 'returned happiness' was known to have continued for three days and three nights.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

The potlatch was the traditional feasts for Nuu-chah-nulth people. Their traditional feasts were categorized for various social functions. These feasts achieved many purposes for their society and through them, funerals, the naming ceremony, the rite of passage, memorials, the succession of chiefs, and wolf dance were carried out. More importantly, the potlatch affirmed their traditional values and ideas, carried out law and order of the society, and strengthened the tribal and individual status.

The chapter mainly addressed the research sub-question: How did the Nuu-chah-nulth ideas influence their society and practices? The study found the evidences that the traditional philosophy and worldview were reflected in cultural traditions and rituals, but the worldview also revealed their religious identity. Because through their religious identity, the study then can imagine how the Nuu-chah-nulth could understand Christianity.

The potlatch by default was the social mechanism for sustaining balance and harmony of the society. Maintaining balance and harmony was pertinent to the sustenance of their tribal society. The OT Hebrew society by observing their codified law of Ten Commandments (Exo. 20: 2-17; Deut. 5: 6-21) preserved the righteousness of their society. Likewise, maintaining balance and harmony was embedded in the communal imperative of the Nuu-chah-nulth society. They needed the vehicle through which the official communal dynamics were processed. There, the potlatch was not only the celebration and commemoration of a special tribal event but also the social instrument to fulfil that function.

In the study in this chapter, two important findings emerged. First, it was the communal nature of Nuu-chah-nulth society. And, secondly and more importantly, the idea of *Quu?asa* as the communal space surfaced. The term ‘communitarian’ was first coined by the Indigenous scholar Jace Weaver to emphasize the community-centeredness of Indigenous people (Weaver 1998). The communitarian nature was not derived from their social preference, but the communal social system innately embedded in the social structure of their traditional community as discussed in Chapter Three (3.4.5). The evidence of community-centred life, in this chapter, was seen in the decisions, preparations, process, and participants in their various community events that they hold, in fact, the participants involved in every part were made up of community-wide participation. The second reason for that was that their identity, law, and destiny were determined and influenced within the community — the individual identity rooted deeply

in the relationship to their ancestors; the wisdom of the community determined the judicious nature; and their destiny was related to their concept of *Quu?asa*, their ideal community.

Another important finding emerged in this chapter, which was the traditional concept of *Quu?asa*. It was the concept that related their ideas about the personhood, the origin, the identity and the destiny of the Nuuchahnulth person. *Quu?asa*, which might be called the root concept in Nuuchahnulth culture, was a complex notion. In the primary sense, it signified an individual or tribal ancestors, heritage, origin, and destiny. *Quu?asa* could be future; first, it was understood to be the spiritual space of ancestors, believing that the dead joined their ancestors in *Quu?asa*. As it was in the origin myth (Chapter Three), the spiritual and physical world of the Nuuchahnulth is intimately related. *Quu?asa* is likewise a shared space of spiritual and physical, and the space of ancestors was a space shared with living descendants. This *Quu?asa* concept has provided the dying with the hope of immortality and introduced the concept of their status and destiny and salvation to the Nuuchahnulth human outlook. The concept may also serve as a gateway for the Nuuchahnulth to understand Christian personhood and salvation.

Moreover, in their ordinary ceremonies, religious and spiritual values also manifested. Consistent with their worldview, their culture and religion were woven together that the two were not easily distinguishable. It was the system of governing that maintained laws and order, and judiciaries were enforced. The potlatch was their government, church, and communal events. Albeit tacit, the hierarchy of class and order of their society which were not in their ordinary day to day conversations were only shown and reinforced in these gatherings. In this way, the tribal society maintained its order.

The Nuuchahnulth was like any other society. The people share similar concerns and issues of other societies. Sometimes, they co-operate, and other times they compete. Their interrelationships are like others when they care for one another and when they hate each other. They may side with a group of people with the same thoughts or struggle with

people with different ideas. However, what was distinguishable about their society was that the traditional values from, a 'communitarian' nature remained firmly in their society, and the rituals in their feasts reflected the same values reinforced this unity. In their tradition, everything that is happening in the lives of their communities reflected in their communal rituals. The wisdom of the elders that reflected in every aspect of the communal assemblies guided them to reach the right conclusions. Elders' wisdom was considered their most needed wisdom in their lives. Accordingly, it was through these ceremonies that they eventually brought their lives together as well as balance and integrity to their societies.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### TLOO-QWAH-NAH

#### 5.1 Introduction

*Tloo-qwah-nah* is a dramatic re-enactment of the legend, of a hero who encountered spiritual wolves, that passed down in the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The legend involves various plot stages explaining their adaptation of the spirit result in transformation into power and bravery. The primary aim of the chapter is to address the research sub-question: ‘How do older Nuu-chah-nulth ideas influence their social practices?’ In the chapter, the study explored the steps of the ritual to find out about the spiritual transformation the Nuu-chah-nulths experience through *Tloo-qwah-nah* (wolf dance), and to understand how this tradition could relate to and create an understanding of the Holy Spirit.

*Tloo-qwah-nah* (*ʔuk<sup>w</sup>aana*) is a traditional ritual referred to as ‘wolf ritual’ or ‘winter ritual’ by the Nuu-chah-nulth and related groups.<sup>1</sup> *Tloo-qwah-nah* went through various changes before becoming a powerful tradition of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. According to a member of the Makah tribe, the ritual ‘came up from the West coast of Vancouver Island and each tribe that it passed through ‘adding something to it.’ Data suggest that there are multiple meanings found for the name of the ritual, for *tlu’gwala* (Kwakiutl) or *tloo-qwah-nah* (Nuu-chah-nulth), with variant spellings of the same.<sup>2</sup> But they lead to one philosophical idea.

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<sup>1</sup> The Makah and Southern Kwakiutl.

<sup>2</sup> There is no unified spelling for their language due to the oral nature of their language.



### 5.1.1 Meaning of the Ritual

The Kwakiutl's *tlu'gwala* is commonly known to mean 'to find a treasure – specifically, to obtain special powers and privileges from a spirit' (Ernst 1952:2). Here, 'a spirit' suggests the ceremonial adoption of a spirit helper. In this case, it is not necessarily individual but social or tribal in force (Ernst 1952:2). The experience of spiritual transformation is the root of Indigenous spirituality. Though it ultimately began as personal and private, its pursuit is fundamentally social. Power comes from contact with a supernatural being. It comes from the encounter with a perceptive being that human beings share the breath of life (Ridington 1996:467). A Makah person stated that the *Klokali* (*Klukwalle*) meant 'people who had been among the walrus' (Densmore 1939:101). This was an evidence that the idea of a spirit initially came from their view of animals. Often in Indigenous culture, animals are imbued with spiritual significance. This was even clearer as most of the fourteen sub-divisions of Nuu-chah-nulth tribes were represented with their symbolic animals (Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council).

However, the Nuu-chah-nulth elder Richard Atleo suggested a literal meaning for the word *tloo-qwah-nah* as 'we remember reality (remember-reality-we)' (Atleo 2004:38). Atleo interpreted it to be philosophical meaning to the ritual of their traditional dance. But the reality it refers was a reality with the tribal narrative of the encountering the spiritual wolf and receiving spiritual power. Through this ceremony, they remembered the powerful reality that their ancestors received when they encountered a spiritual being.

The accuracy of either translations was indeterminate because of the obvious differences in meaning but point to the possibility that this ceremony passed through different times and places and adjusted to different socio-cultural needs. The study found that there were multiple origins of the dance ritual.

Nevertheless, 'to find a treasure' was widely accepted as the meaning for *Tloo-qwah-nah* (Kruger 2003:71). When their ancestors, family heroes, encountered with the spirit

or spiritual animal, they gave them treasures or tools that helped them to rise above their limits. Such treasures remained in them forever once they are given. The words 'to find treasure' or 'we remember reality' could mean the same thing.

The name of the ritual did contain the word 'wolf' also suggested that this ritual was beyond wolf itself and implied a more critical spiritual meaning for them. *Tloo-qwah-nah* ceremony was a community's act of remembrance. A dance ritual form of *Tloo-qwah-nah* was performed at their public events. Therefore, it was no doubt that *Tloo-qwah-nah* appeared to be a significant and meaningful ritual for the Nuu-chah-nulth.

#### ***5.1.1.1 Tribal Narrative***

Here the wolf story may be focus on understanding Christianity by comparing it with Christianity, which was how this cultural consciousness worked in the dynamics of their people. Such examples could be found in the historical stories of the ancient Hebrew peoples. The tribal narrative of the ancient Hebrews began with Moses, the famous Exodus, and the historic wilderness life of the Hebrew people. When Moses met Yahweh in the burning bush (Exo. 3: 1-22), transformed Moses, the leader of the Hebrew people, and the stories of the Hebrew peoples, who had experienced various miracles in the desert, recorded in the OT book of Exodus, had become the national narrative of the peoples of Israel from generation to generation and continued to change them, especially by remembering the reality.

Likewise, the wolf ritual (*tloo-qwah-nah*) was the tribal narrative of the Nuu-chah-nulth people through repeated dramatic dance re-enactment which reminded them of the power they needed. The late Robert Thomas was a Cherokee elder, a practitioner of the Cherokee traditional religion, a mentor to a wide variety of younger Indigenous leaders, and an anthropologist at the University of Arizona. A collection of some of his writings, *getting to the Heart of the Matter*, was produced as a result of the twenty-five-year

gatherings of Native Ministries Consortium. All of his writings in the collection reflect his concern and passion for the survival of Indigenous peoples:

American society is well known for its ability to incorporate and absorb disparate social and cultural groups. Some intellectuals have likened America to a great social and cultural 'cement mixer,' a huge homogenization machine. Conversely, it is difficult for distinct groups and people to survive, socially and culturally, in such a milieu (Thomas 1990).

He said that the Indigenous community could survive a profound cultural loss and continue as social groups if the following conditions can be established, as shown by the minority peoples in the Old World, such as the Coptic Christians of Egypt, the Basques of Spain, the Welsh of the British Isles, the Ainu of Hokkaido, and the Maya of Yucatan in Mexico, who have survived in such circumstances with four features in common (Thomas 1990:23):

1. A distinct language, even if it simply functions as a ceremonial/holy language,
2. A unique religion, even if it is their own version of a world religion,
3. A tie to a particular piece of land, a homeland and a holy land,
4. A sacred narrative, which tells you who you are and why you must survive as a people.

To Thomas, to have a unique religion included having a unique sacred narrative. A sacred narrative could serve as a part of their cultural representation and be a religion to bring its people together. Given the weight of those scripture passages where the salvation of a group was called for, rather than individual salvation, the Apostle Paul expressed his concern over Israel's salvation, as in Romans 10:1 and elsewhere, the distinctive group identity and cultural survival of the native people in North America was an essential element in defining their salvation.

### 5.1.2 Multiple Origins

There were two legends that claimed the origin of the ritual. The *tloo-qwah-nah* that started in Barkley Sound, especially in *It-tat'soo* village near Ucluelet, passed onto Clayoquot through marriage. But the Clayoquot already had their *tloo-qwah-nah*. But

their *tloo-qwah-nah* had no wolf in earlier days (Ernst 1952:48;99). It was not long ago that they started the Wolf *Tloo-qwah-nah*. Clayoquot *Tloo-qwah-nah* used the *oo-shin'nek* dances, the masked procession and dance, associated with the Thunderbird, the Land Otter, or with the Mink (Ernst 1952:99-100). Clayoquot *tloo-qwah-nah* originally came from the northern Nuu-chah-nulth who borders with the Kwakiutl. Hence, the mere factor of geographical location accounted for many changes in rituals, and conversely, the number of masks in tribal contact increased remarkably.

### **5.1.3 From Bravery to Privilege**

The Nuu-chah-nulth generally understood, in the past and present, that the practical aim of the dance ritual was to foster bravery of warriors although later the aim shifted from fostering bravery to demonstrating their social status. By initiation *tloo-qwah-nah*, the novice gained the right, from the tribes, to share henceforth in the collective tribal dances or ceremonials during the winter season. So, the purpose of the dance ritual was not limited to fostering bravery but has ceremonial purpose. However, it evolved to be a social device for stratification of their society and to fortify their tribal identity during a particular period in the past. The American Ethnographer Susan Ernst also acknowledge this shift and noted that ‘the earlier ceremony that aimed at fostering bravery and the qualities that make physical and mental endurance were changed by the concern for the prestige to be gained by membership in an exclusive secret order’ (Ernst 1952:82). Owning authentic wolves is a matter of family pride.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> From Caroline Frank, a friend and a research informant from Ahousaht.



**Figure 5.1: Wolf Dance at Ahousaht on 28 June 2010 (Source: Personal Photo Album)**

#### ***5.1.3.1 Reasons for the Change***

The change was due to the arrival of the European fur traders in the late eighteenth century. After Captain Cook's initial visit to the Nootka Sound, as many as two-hundred ships visited the area creating busy commercial activities. Intertribal war-fares were no longer needed to ensure the status of tribes as they generated enough income engaged in the lucrative trade with Europeans. As a result, the bravery needed for war was no longer considered necessary.

#### ***5.1.3.2 History of Intertribal Wars***

Frequent tribal wars may have raised awareness of their survival. Their war history proved it. The idea of their wives and daughters being enslaved by other tribes could have been terrible for the Northwest tribes that value their families and tribes.

A number of disparate written sources indicate that the Northwest coast Indigenous tribes often engaged in intertribal wars to acquire canoes and slaves (Sapir and Swadesh 1955:336-452; Dickason 2002:50; Smith 1974:140). Archaeological evidence suggested

that the Northwest coast tribes were involved in brutal wars with their conventional weapons. The weapons displayed at the National Museum of the American Indian, in the Smithsonian Institute, are labelled as ‘slave killer’ club, ‘cannibal bowl’ which show the glimpse of the fierce wars among the north-western tribes.

During a brief period after contact, the warfare of the people shifted against European traders who were armed with muskets and cannons on their ships (Howe 1974:21; Howay 2008:307-8). But soon the priority over warfare shifted to the maritime fur trade (1774-1825) and other interests. In March 1803, Maquinna and his men captured the American trading ship Boston and killed the captain and most of the crew (Jewitt 1824). In 1811, the Tla-o-qui-aht attacked and destroyed the trading ship Tonquin in Clayoquot Sound as an act of revenge for an insult by the ship’s captain (Carlson & Osmond 2017).

But, by the 1900s, the increased presence of European settlers on the Nuu-chah-nulth territories forced them onto the reserves, and the implementing of the Indian Act and the residential school system had them new foci. So, as the awareness of the war grew less and less, their rituals gradually turned to those for privileges proud in the family rather than to foster the strength of the warriors.

#### **5.1.4 Variations of the Ritual**

Because each tribe had a need for valour, they created a wolf dance ritual that was unique to only their tribe. The evidence appeared at a different ritual in each region. The Nuu-chah-nulth, the Makah, and the southern Kwakiutl were the Indigenous tribes which have cultural and linguistic ties as the Wakashan group, and they shared the wolf ritual as their common tradition. When compared to the widespread nature of other traditions, such as potlatch and folklore, it was noticeable that the practices of *Tloo-qwah-nah* remain

proximate to the general geography of the linguistic group. Clutesi,<sup>4</sup> the Tseshaht writer, recalled an era in which the *tloo-qwah-nah* was actively practised:

The initiatory ceremonies required to gain its portals were imposing and extremely costly but nevertheless all bona fide members of all the tribes along the west coast of the great Island, Vancouver Island, belonged to the *Tloo-qwah-nah* Society. It was known to be the most powerful society that flourished along this rugged coast (Clutesi 1969:10).

The study explored to see whether differences detected in the structure and duration of the ritual in different groups rendered any output related to the research interests.

#### **5.1.4.1 Makah *Tloo-qwah-nah***

The duration of the Makah ritual was usually four days and the masked procession happens on the fourth and final night of the wolf ritual (Ernst 1952:21). The Makah *Klukwalle* was also held as a healing ceremony (Ernst 1952:28). The Quillayutes, Makah's Southern neighbour, had a distinct feature on 'receiving the spirit' in their *Klukwalle* (Ernst 1952:55-62). This feature was not specially highlighted the steps of the ritual but implied when they performed the adaptation of the wolf spirit.

The ritual specificities of the Makah and the Quillayutes pointed out that their *tloo-qwah-nah* were further advanced as a religious ritual at the time of observation by Ernst. The Makah and the Quillayutes tribes were located on the northwest peninsula of Washington State and divided by seas with Vancouver Island. Having been in a relatively comfortable position, they were likely to have been excluded from the brutal tribal war in the northwest.

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<sup>4</sup> George Clutesi, (1905-1988), was a Tseshaht artist, actor, and writer.

#### **5.1.4.2 *Nuu-chah-nulth Tloo-qwah-nah***

However, the Nuu-chah-nulth *Tloo-qwah-nah* was lengthy, as long as eleven days, and contained more colourful masked processions, indicating that the ritual was further evolved to be an aggressive cultural communal ceremony. The Nuu-chah-nulth people were known to be the mask makers and used their mask creations in the ritual. According to Ernst, their art form was distinctive and in its bare abstraction, deeply impressive (Ernst 1952:64).<sup>5</sup> It is generally understood that ‘the modern form of the *Klokaki* is a gathering solely for pleasure and lasts only one day’ (Densmore 1939).

When the *Tloo-qwah-nah* (*Klukwana*) of the Nuu-chah-nulth and the *Klukwalle* of the Makah and Quillayutes were compared, the Nuu-chah-nulth ritual was more complex in most of its traditional patterns. But the resemblances in the form are obviously too close to be accidental (Ernst 1952:82).

Nevertheless, such differing renderings in the forms were emphasized by a prevailing inner likeness, by a community of intention. The central plots of the wolf ritual remained constant as it was the dramatic enactment of the capture of the people, new initiates, by wolves, the receiving of powers from wolves during the capture, and the release from the wolf spirit by the other members of the wolf dance society.

#### **5.1.4.3 *Primal Patterns of the Ritual***

However, despite the ritual appearing in almost all of their social events, it was not easy to find someone to account for unambiguous and authoritative data on the primal patterns of the ceremony. The reasons for this ambiguity was three-fold: First, non-members were not allowed to attend the complete ritual. Second, the members who participated in the ceremony were not allowed to discuss it with non-members because it was a secret society.

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<sup>5</sup> The mask performance was an area of her interests and the original aim of her research.



Thirdly, the current ritual was usually a shortened dance performance that shows only the implied steps of the ritual. Ernst agrees:

Blurred by time and the impact of frequent regional borrowings, the original structure of the ritual of the Wolves (granting there was once a master pattern) has by now weathered down into an enigma for students of primitive culture. Enigmatic must have been even its inception; shrouded well in that heavy veil of silence concealing the secret ritual of a people innately silent. And, since its creators possess no written language, there exists no written record whatever as to its procedure among those people who gave it being, even among those stubborn living groups who will still revere its ancient rites. A possible primal pattern thus becomes deeply elusive (Ernst 1952:1).

By the time the ritual was open to every member of the tribe to witness, the primal form of the initiation ritual was significantly altered. Tom's wolf ritual,<sup>6</sup> written about July 1915, was given in almost the same fashion as any potlatch. Everyone from the two neighbouring tribes, Tsessaht and Hupacasath, was invited (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89). It was safe to say that the two traditions, *tloo-qwah-nah* and potlatch, gradually merged, but segregated only as different programmes in a cultural gathering. Now we see the minimized version of wolf dance *tloo-qwah-nah* performed at potlatches and other tribal events. This assessment was based on my personal participations in the potlatches.

#### 5.1.4.4 'Winter Ritual'

The winter was their ceremonial season. Thus, the wolf ritual was also called the winter ritual. The prevalent use of the ritual was evident as all of the Nuu-chah-nulth sub-division had a name for this ritual:

Even the name of the Wolf ritual, often called simply the 'winter ceremonial' along the lower coast from the season of its observance, offers endless variation in form and spelling among these different tribes. It is the Nootkan '*tlukwana*,' the Kyuquot '*tlugani*,' the Makah '*tlugali*,' or *Klukwalle*, from a probable Kwakiutl base '*tlugwala*' (Ernst 1952:2).

There was no united spelling of this ceremony among them because the Nuu-chah-nulth had no written language.

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<sup>6</sup> 47. Tom's Big Wolf Ritual in *Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography* (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89-120).

Variations in this kind of traditional performance was generally understood and allowed without attempting to bring it to the original form. Despite the changes in minor ceremonials in the tribes, a certain dominant dance ritual persistently stayed in the general regions. The Wolf Dance of Nuu-chah-nulth, the Sun Dance of Sioux, the Hopi Snake Dance of the Southwest, the Rain Dance shared amongst Pueblo, Hopi, Zuni, Cherokee and Apache, and the War Dance of Arapaho and Comanche, are preserved to this day and used for their ceremonies. The ancient form of these dances was preserved and handed down to indifferent hands of the later generations or the neighbouring groups to be reformulated into a pattern of beliefs and new symbolic actions.

## **5.2 Initiation of Warriors**

Hence, certain relics of the Makah and Quillayutes practice pointed back to an earlier warrior ceremony that aimed to foster bravery and bodily and mental endurance. Among old Indigenous groups, such as the Osage Indians, their warriors were called ‘wolf,’ as being people of ‘strong fortitude’ (Warde 2013:41). The Nuu-chah-nulths affirmed that the wolf rituals were about the training for the warrior qualities, of power, courage, and endurance.

### **5.2.1 Story of *Ha-Sass***

The story of Ha-Sass was one of the two legends that claimed the ownership of the ritual. A Tseshaht elder compiled a story that proved that the origin of *Tloo-qwah-nah* was to promote the valour of their tribe:

They say that four brothers fled to Nootka Island when their tribe was wiped out in a war with neighbours. The youngest brother, *Ha-Sass*, sought knowledge from the wolves that were said to know everything. He disguised himself in seal skin and drained his blood, so the wolves would not smell his human scent. But the wolves found him and took him to their lair to eat. When *Ha-Sass* revealed himself, they admired his cunning

so much that they taught him the wolf dances and rituals, so he would become strong like them. The wolves wore masks of men for these magic ceremonies. After four days of training, they gave *Ha-Sass* an enhanced club and sent him home to teach his brothers and other young men the secrets of the wolf's power (Ernst 1952:82-83; McDowell 2012:253).

The enhanced club mentioned in the story suggested that the story was from the time of intent inter-tribal war. The clubs were used as the weapon of the wars. As well, the cunning was praised rather than scrutinized showed that the culture was generally favourable towards the cultural characteristics of cunning or the trickster amongst the Nuu-chah-nulth group. In Chapter Three, the trickster nature was discussed when discussing the character of God in Nuu-chah-nulth (3.4.6.2).

This story was a Tseshah family legend summarised by Frank Williams. *Ha-Sass* the youngest of the four brothers, the only survivors of the war, took on himself the task of obtaining the desired secrets about the strength of the Spiritual Wolves. They wanted to get power from the Wolves because they knew that the Wolves had the power that would help them. During the four days encounter with the Wolves, *Ha-Sass* obtained a magic club, the *tloo-qwah-nah* dances, songs, and masks. When the magic club was merely held up, it caused people who looked at it to die. It was a powerful weapon against their enemies to keep his village safe. They evidently drew strengths from *tloo-qwah-nah* dance itself.

In the ritual, the Wolves wore the masks of men, animal, and birds. The masks were given to him that he only knew how to make them. Upon his return, he taught the *tloo-qwah-nah* to his relatives and to all his tribesmen. The aim was the rescue and survival of his tribe through bravery and endurance.

Judging from the fact that the Nuu-chah-nulth were the talented mask-makers and many of artful masks appeared in these rituals and that each animal mask represented the spirits of a different animal, the Nuu-chah-nulth wolf ritual was seen as the most elaborate

ritual that this society had cultivated. Therefore, *tloo-qwah-nah* not only bestowed their tribal identity but also was the symbol of cultural pride.



**Figure 5.2: Wolf Dance at Ahousaht on 26 February 2017 (Source: Personal Photo Album)**

### **5.2.2 Another Story of *Tloo-qwah-nah***

There was another legend (Ernst 1952:88-89) that explained how the *Tloo-qwah-nah* began. A young woman of the tribe, with three other companions, went to *To-mak'cluh*, looking for *ah-ets'l*, a root used for food. They ran into a Wolf trotting across their path, strong, sleek, and scarcely looking at the women. The young woman said: 'How handsome he is! I wish my husband when I marry, could be as strong and as fearless.' As the legend goes, the Wolf could transform into a man or to any other creatures. The story described that the Wolf was as a spiritual, omniscient, and omnipotent being. The young woman married the Wolf and, soon, two sons were born. She learned about *Tloo-qwah-nah* while living in the wolf country.

It was through the benevolent act of the Wolf that she was brought back to her old father. She told the father about *Tloo-qwah-nah*. Out of her gratitude to the Wolf she had a song of her own, and as a sign that the wolf will be able to recognise her again. Upon learning about *Tloo-qwah-nah*, her father gathered all the people together and taught it to the people. The *Tloo-qwah-nah* was about the power and the strength of the wolves to them. After the daughter showed her father all the songs and all the dances, which the daughter had learned from the Wolves, the father began the *Tloo-qwah-nah*, and later taught the rest of the tribe. This was at the village of *It-tat'soo* (Ucluelet) that was claimed to be the starting place of *Tloo-qwah-nah*.

It was not known that when the first *Tloo-qwah-nah* was delivered as in the stories, whether the ritual as they practised was just a collection of songs and dance moves or there was an extra spiritual discourse about an inner-strength to the warriors. The father in the story suggested that he learned 'the secret of the wolf ritual,' implying that there was a spiritual lesson about *Tloo-qwah-nah*.

However, since wolf dance was choreographed in the way that requires physical strength from the dancers, the dance itself could be the training itself to foster bravery and endurance of the warriors. An Ehatís informant said that women were excluded from the wolf dance because of the exhausting physical dance routine.<sup>7</sup> American literature about wolf myth assumed generally that these rituals involved some scars, usually from piercing and require the stamina of five days' concentration (Robisch 2009:242).

Viola Garfield, an anthropologist, noted that the many numbers of stories from Northwest Indigenous peoples involving animals marrying humans was in order to punish, instruct, and give power, crests, or gifts, to them (Garfield 1966:49). She concluded that the motivation behind many of these myths was the deep interest of the lineages, territories, and possessions (Garfield 1966:49). Both stories about the origin of *Tloo-qwah-nah* involved secrecy and private interaction with wolves suggested that they also claimed the ownership of the wolf ritual. The story elements like the marriage and the dramatic encounter with the wolf suggested that the secrecy of myth was kept only to them and not shared with anyone else, due to intense tribal rivalry.

### **5.3 Nuu-chah-nulth *Tloo-qwah-nah***

As aforementioned, the Nuu-chah-nulth territories were situated on the mid-coast of western Vancouver Island, and during the early European explorers, the sailors escaped the high winter winds of the Pacific Northwest and took refuge in the Nootka Straits. The early visitors to the area such as Mozino (Mozino 1926), Roquefeuil (Roquefeuil 1823), Cook, Vancouver, Perez, Sproat (Sproat 1868), and Jewitt (Jewitt 1824) gave their eyewitness accounts of Nuu-chah-nulth's cultural particularities. Several Western scholars, such as Franz Boas (Boas 1897), Sapir and Swadesh (Sapir & Swadesh 1955), A. H. Ernst (Ernst 1952), and Phillip Drucker (Drucker 1940) all studied and published

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<sup>7</sup> Maggi Miller, an Ehatís informant

about the Nuu-chah-nulth tradition of *Tloo-qwah-nah*. Their studies told that the variant versions and the detailed descriptions of the ritual emerged even within the same cultural area, as their cultural interests also varied.

Susan Ernst gave the most exciting and detailed account of the Nuu-chah-nulth *Tloo-qwah-nah* which shed a light on the primal ritual pattern. However, the generality of the detail descriptions was still debatable since they were drawn from the observation of a single winter ritual. Plus, her initial interest in studying the wolf ritual was spurred by the interest in the Nuu-chah-nulth mask performance since she was a playwright and her main academic disciplines included drama.<sup>8</sup>

Since the wolf ritual record by Sapir and Swadesh showed that the earlier pattern of the rituals were fused with other communal ceremonies, over time (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:57-120), the primal pattern of the ritual was unfound.

### **5.3.1 Suspicion on Shamanic Ritual and Human Sacrifice**

Regrettably, Drucker's record of the wolf rituals presents some misconstructions, as a result of the probable influence of the first European observers, John Thompson and John R. Jewitt, the two survivors from the ship, Boston. The two men escaped from the massacre at the Nootka Inlet by Mowachaht warriors in March 1803. During the period of his capture at Nootka, Jewitt wrote in his secret dairy about the suspicions of human sacrifice at the end of the dance ritual. He believed to have seen that *tloo-qwah-nah* ended with the sacrifice of a man (McDowell 2012:253).

Furthermore, Drucker transcribed *tloo-qwah-nah* as 'loqwon'a', as perhaps wrote down as he heard it, and inappropriately interpreted it as 'the Shaman's ritual' (McDowell 2012:253). The Roman Catholic Priest Father August Joseph Brabant (1845-1912) who was a missionary to Hesquiaht, one of the subdivisions of the Nuu-chah-nulth.

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<sup>8</sup> She was a professor of English and Drama at the University of Oregon.

The resilient resistance to his missionary activities at the village caused him to wage a fifteen-year-long ideological battle with them, about the ‘shamanic ritual,’ with Chief Tawinisam (McDowell 2012:383). As well, Sproat an official magistrate investigated the murder of a Tseshaht woman and concluded that it was a ‘ritual sacrifice’ connected with the annual wolf dance ceremony (Sproat 1987:106; McDowell 2012:254).

#### ***5.3.1.1 Yuquot Whalers Shrine***

These suspicions were compounded by the archaeological findings. Yuquot Whalers' Shrine was discovered in 1785 and contains 88 sculpted human figures, 4 carved whale figures, and 16 human skulls. The anthropologist Franz Boas excitedly purchased the shrine on behalf of the American Museum of Natural History. This discovery brewed the controversy even more when he thought and recorded that the ritual performed at the shrine was described as the rituals associated with the use of skulls or bodies. Given the long history of Nuu-chah-nulth whaling, going back to 4000 years ago (Monks 2001), they positively considered the possibility of the ritual with human sacrifice. However, such record did not appear in the earlier French texts (Jonaitis 2000). Because it was a sensitive issue for the local people of the region, no bustling research on this topic was published loudly but remained one of the inconclusions of the Northwest Indigenous study.

#### ***5.3.1.2 Euro-centric Mischaracterization of the Dance***

Frenzied dances, songs and drums could easily have come the shaman dancers for the Westerners who visited for the first time. Nevertheless, certain anthropologists, such as Kehoe (2000), were critical of using the term ‘shaman’ since this criticism implied the notion of cultural appropriation and bias.

An ideal definitive of ‘shamanism’ such as drumming, chanting, spirit communication and healing were practices that also existed outside of ‘shamanism’ and played similar



roles in non-shamanic cultures. For example, the role of chanting existed in Judeo-Christians, Buddhist, and Islamic rituals. Their expressions were unique to each culture that used them and could not be generalized into a category of primitive religious practices. Boas articulated this idea, of cultural relativism, stated that a person's beliefs, values, and practices should be understood based on that person's own culture, rather than be judged against the criteria of another. (Boas 1887:589). Boas' theory of cultural relativism focused on the differences, but this was a case of miscategorisation and imposing general ideas that were formed from a unilateral cultural perspective.

### 5.3.1.3 *Nuu-chah-nulth 'Shaman'*

The Nuu-chah-nulth 'shamans' were not of a sacred religion,<sup>9</sup> but linked to and reinforcing the practical everyday life of the Nuu-chah-nulth, which was similar to 'Urogi' the witch men of the Meru people of Mount Kenya, who dealt with the historical challenges of what their society had to face (Fadiman 1994). Thus, an Ehatesaht elder described her informed idea of the 'shaman':

They are doctors. They are cute real old men who he has gone over to the other side, being very spiritual. They were called 'Medicine men' because they helped to heal. My Grandpa passed on when my daughter was a baby and he was a Medicine man. I don't like to call him a shaman. What a horrible name! The definition of a shaman varies, but it sounds so evil, with wild makeup, movies portray empty as awful! I don't know if the word came from some other dialect or maybe the name given by some other natives. I prefer the name 'medicine man' please. A lot of the history drawn up by white folks was in their point of view, sometimes not all true! We were also 'heathens' remember? But I can just imagine the fear some of them had, because of what our medicine men could do. They knew how to rid bodies of things that were troubling them, bringing balance, without chopping them up.<sup>10</sup>

Drucker's word *logwon'a* did not appear in the Nuu-chah-nulth vocabulary. Neither were found the words to resemble the western notion of the shaman. The works of Sapir which were the results of collaboration with local informants show no records for the word

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<sup>9</sup> From an interview with the Ahousaht Elder, Louie Joseph.

<sup>10</sup> This quote is from my personal conversation with Maggie Miller, of Ehatis sub-tribe of Nuu-chah-nulth.

meaning ‘shaman’ which indicated the shaman was in the cultural idea. Instead, *tloo-qwah-nah* simply meant ‘wolf ritual’ (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89, 122).

The closest Nuu-chah-nulth word for the shaman was the medicine man, *ʔuuštaqyuu*, and, for ‘evil medicine man,’ *ʔminuuʔaqʔ*, which appear in the Nuu-chah-nulth vocabulary (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991:133). Drucker, however, persistently termed it ‘shamans’ dance’ for *tloo-qwah-nah* (Drucker 1951:386). *Tloo-qwah-nah* was translated as the ‘wolf ritual’ in various dialects of the Nuu-chah-nulth groups (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991:133). Their misconstruction of *tloo-qwah-nah* to shaman dance of Western idea, in the records of Drucker and Sproat, proved the Western bias. This kind of cultural misunderstanding continued from the first-time humankind encountered another culture in different sides of the world, and the Indigenous people suffered monumental difficulties from these misunderstandings. We are still struggling to get out of this mode of understanding about our human world.

### **5.3.2 Initiation *Tloo-qwah-nah***

Ernst maintained that the ritual was a communal performance that unfolded into four parts. This ceremony was to reproduce the tribal narrative of their heroic salvation passed down to them in the dramatic re-enactment, to relive its meaning once again, and to experience new power. Although it was used once an initiation ceremony for the new members, the story was a tribal narrative as remembered, and internal changes were made to everyone in their community.

Again, a tribal or national narrative was an important tradition to share among the members to remember and to recreate to draw strengths as a society moved forward. The OT Hebrew people tightly held their Yahweh narrative, which was introduced by Moses and lived under his leadership. They drew strengths from the same narrative while travelling in the wilderness for forty years to reach the land promised to their ancestors. *Tloo-qwah-nah* was a tribal narrative for the Nuu-chah-nulth. The ritual symbolized the

story of their survival and the spiritual and emotional outcome of it was to give them essential strength for which the tribe overcome faced challenges.

#### **5.3.2.1 Names of *Tloo-qwah-nah***

*Klukwat'ka-sak'kah* is the different name used for initiation *tloo-qwah-nah*. It was the ceremony to initiate new members into the wolf society. *Klukwat'ka-sak'kah* is also referred to as a long and full ritual, compared to the short *tloo-qwah-nah*, *Klukwana Eet'shit'l* (Ernst 1952:80).

#### **5.3.2.2 Four Stages of *Tloo-qwah-nah***

The essential stages for initiation *tloo-qwah-nah* took place within four days, with a day counting from the evening to the next day. The main stages were divided:

- 1) Abduction of the Children;
- 2) Driving out the Wolf Spirit;
- 3) Seclusion by the Wolf Spirit;
- 4) Release of the Children.

These stages were followed by the masked dance procession, *oo-shin'nek*. In the modern ceremonies, *oo-shin'nek* (animal mask procession) was omitted unless the occasion of the ritual was fitting to the tribal purpose.

#### **5.3.2.3 Announcement of Invitations**

The decision about the intent of holding *Tloo-qwah-nah* was made by the higher chiefs from different families in the village, and plans were agreed upon at the same meeting.

But these were hidden plans kept the secret from the rest of the village.<sup>11</sup> Whoever leaked the secret plans, received severe punishment.

### **Messengers**

As soon as the chiefs decided on the first night of the ceremonial, messengers were sent out to invite the people on the same day. The messengers usually consisted of two men who wore red face painting, and the traditional cedar-bark head rings, with two crossed eagle feathers in the hair. The messengers were called *chu-chu-kwah-an'imus*, 'those who invite the people' (Ernst 1952:65).

### **Face Painting: Cultural Consciousness of Transformation**

The face paintings were costumes and included more than face patterns. They masked the wearer to transform the person in a symbolically appropriate way. This step was part of the cleansing ritual or the cultural fundamental consciousness of *oo-sumch* (*oošumch*) needed for the achievement of significant undertakings (Hoover & Museum 2000:174). Women often painted their faces with black paint for singing in the wolf ritual, so their voices would be heard distinctly. But more colourful face paintings were mostly applied in rituals for fishing or collecting other seafood, according to Sapir's collection of face paintings.<sup>12</sup> The Nuu-chah-nulth had a habit in their religion that the understanding of spiritual sublimation was perceived through change or taking on another form (image) of existence.

#### ***5.3.2.4 Invitation of New Initiates***

*Chu-chu-kwah-an'imus* (messengers) came into the house of *Tloo-qwah-nah* members and mentioned the name of the eldest son or daughter, saying: 'You are invited by..., who

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<sup>11</sup> An informant from Ehatis said that they uphold this ancient ritual costume with reverence. The secrecy of the plan of *Tloo-qwah-nah* is still being kept.

<sup>12</sup> Sapir's collection of face paintings. *Nuu-chah-nulth Voices: Histories, Objects & Journeys*, edited by Alan L. Hoover, (Royal British Columbia Museum, 2000).

is giving a feast'. The name of the father, the wife, and the other children of the house were mentioned in due order, and similar invitations were delivered to all *Tloo-qwah-nah* members<sup>13</sup> at each house in the village.

#### **5.3.2.5 Invitation of Whole Village**

However, at the later wolf rituals, all members of the tribe were invited to participate from the reception party (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89-90), and all subsequent stages until the exorcizing of the wolf spirit. Some records indicated that the exorcising of the wolf spirit was considered the central ritual which was hidden from non-members (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:94). As the invitations were delivered in ritual form, they were only delivered to the different houses of the village containing members of the wolf society. However, the host of the feast was called *Cle-isch* or *Tlee-dtsoo*, which means 'giving a feast to the whole village' as described in Chapter Four (Clutesi 1969:9; Ernst 1952:65). Invitation to the whole village indicated that the ritual was essentially a tribal communal ritual. They maintained symbolic secrecy, but because social approval through participation in the whole village was necessary. Secrecy can also be seen as a stage of symbolic ceremony showing religious significance.

#### **5.3.2.6 Added Purpose: Prestige to Families**

This ceremony, *Klukwat'ka-sak'kah* (wolf dance), that originally trained the bravery of warriors, gradually turned into a tradition to gain the prestige of membership (Ernst 1952:82). As a result, higher-ranking families occupied the majority of the wolf society.<sup>14</sup> Consequently, most wolves belonged to the chiefs' families. An Ahousaht matriarch informed:

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<sup>13</sup> *Tloo-qwah-nah* members are the ones who were already initiated into the club.

<sup>14</sup> According to an Ahousaht informant.

Wolves belong to the chiefs and their dances are sacred. They can be no mistakes during a wolf dance. Most wolf or headdress dances are owned by chiefs. Some men compose their own, but they are not seen as sacred as chiefs' dances. It's more for entertainment.<sup>15</sup>

The privileges and the rights of the wolf dance passed down the family lines of the chiefs, but the exclusivity of that ownership was being challenged today. The authentic wolves belonged to the chiefs and the families of chiefs owned most wolves. The ceremony of the wolf dance was secretive, and the details were concealed from the people of lower classes. The chiefs' ownership of the sacred tradition was to guard their religion. *Tloo-qwah-nah* was never completely a social device for the privileged ranks to enjoy and boast about. But the ceremony of initiating warriors into its society was also an exclusive rite for the class of chiefs:

Politically and socially speaking, Nuu-chah-nulth communities were more stratified than many other examples from around Turtle Island. Typically, *Ha'wiih* (chiefs) married into the families of other *Ha'wiih*. A *Ha'wiih* also passed on his role and responsibilities to his eldest son (Atleo 2010:44).

The system of chiefs (*Ha'wiih*) was central to the economy and the governance of the Nuu-chah-nulth society. This system was passed down the family lines of chiefs. This kind of a seeming disproportion was in contrast to what appeared to be egalitarian in the Nuu-chah-nulth society (3.5), and it begs further exploration.

#### **5.4 Nuu-chah-nulth Equality**

This section explored the cultural particularities explaining the basic social structure of the Nuu-chah-nulth, which did not directly relate the main objective of the chapter but relate to the discussion above and important enough to include. A limitation in this study was as the cultural features were chosen to explore certain aspects related to the final outcomes of the study but the discussion of the features does not render discussion only for the set agenda.

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<sup>15</sup> Carol Frank, of Ahousaht.

Nonetheless, the understanding of equality of Nuu-chah-nulth society was fundamentally different from the justice concept of modern society because of their philosophical orientation on the ownership and the political positions.

#### 5.4.1 Culture of Responsibilities

The Nuu-chah-nulth cultural practices centred on responsibilities, which evolved into customary laws over an extended period. These responsibilities and laws were directly tied to natural resources and were a product of the slow integration of cultures within their environment and the ecosystems (Happynook 2000:40). Modern laws were created around human relationships. These laws established a system that leaved humans outside nature or, as Happynook iterated, ‘makes us believe that we are dominant over the environment or cancer on this earth’ (2000:45). Modern laws created a set of consequences for any broken human relations within this system: fines, prisons, institutions, and the likes. But, Indigenous groups, including the Nuu-chah-nulth, lived within the laws of nature. It was within this boundary that systems of justice, tribal laws, societies and cultural practices developed and turned into indigenous rights. So, equality in their society was not based on individual rights, but on the overall balance of nature and the human community. Thus, to the Nuu-chah-nulth, the kinship dynamics were more important than individual rights. Nuu-chah-nulth relationships were ‘reciprocal and include the responsibility’ on their part to ensure ‘balance and true sustainability’ (Atleo 2004). Thus, their class distinctions and chiefs’ exclusive right to *tloo-qwah-nah* were not considered as inequality.

The Nuu-chah-nulth were the people of the sea and land. *Ha’wiih*<sup>16</sup>(chiefs) were the traditional and hereditary chiefs, compared to the elected chiefs (councils). *Ha’hoonthlii* meant everything in the territory of the chiefs. It included land, water, people, animals,

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<sup>16</sup> The plural form of *Ha’wilth* (chief), meaning hereditary chief.

vegetation, and minerals. *Ha'wiih* were responsible for taking care of *Ha'hoolthlii* in their respective territories (Atleo 2010:8). The chiefs' ownership of the land and the seas (*Ha'hoolthlii*) were defined more in terms of responsibilities than possessions. This peculiar concept of ownership was understood and deeply related to their large family structure. The livelihood of the Nuu-chah-nulth relied on what they got from the land and sea and how they sustained their resources.

#### **5.4.2 Challenge of Modern Liberal Democratic Principles**

However, this role was largely tokenised today, with their communities embracing and changing to work with liberal democratic principles and bureaucratic institutions. The Nuu-chah-nulth society still had *Ha'wiih* in active roles, but their role was symbolic and mostly ceremonial, and so, all Nuu-chah-nulth communities struggled with how to reconcile traditional governance with modern systems (Atleo 2010:44).

The commercial economy, which contradicted their environmental concept, was a source of opposition and concern for many indigenous peoples, but eventually, they bent their values and accepting changes because of the need for jobs and the economy:

It is my contention that by succumbing to a segregated view of life that includes work, leisure, school, play, volunteerism, and spiritual time, we open ourselves to the possibility of acting in ways contrary to our teachings of oneness, respect, reciprocity, and responsibility. One example of this is the defence issued by the proponents of fish farms in our territories. It is stated that these fish farms, which were once vigorously opposed by Ahousaht fishers, now employ a high percentage of our people (Atleo 2010:3).

Most Nuu-chah-nulth elders were not happy about these changes. The late Chief Earl George lamented, 'In the short period of a little more than a century, we have gone from using these things (land and sea) for survival to being employees of large companies' (George 2003:120). These changes were coming to their societies in ways that could not be prevented, and no system could systematically stop them. Though they communally consented to the voices of the elders, the thoughts of the elders and the younger and more progressive generation were bound to differ.



### 5.4.3 Private Ownership

Regarding their attitudes towards personal economy, there was a clear indication of private ownership. Individualism nevertheless prevailed in the Nuu-chah-nulth society, although selfhood was not necessarily perceived as being separate and distinct from others within their communities (Dickason 2002:49). Hence, their personal economic life was likewise personalized.

It was the fur trade period when they started earning (capitalistic) personal income based on their work. All participation and performances in their cultural ceremonies gave out the needed services and were meaningful contributions to the events, and the participants were entitled to receive monetary commissions because all contributions were to be recognized as individual contribution. Also, the elder's principle dictated that rewarding was to show the value of the dignity for those who worked. Also, the ability to distribute the commodities of life through potlatch was possible because they had possessions in the first place. Their social value, emphasising sharing and giving, was seen, on the other hand, as their preoccupation with ownership rights. The economic consciousness of private ownership was displayed even towards the immediate family members or relatives.<sup>17</sup> It was not the society that shared everything without temperance, members of the society did not share their property without a social reason or ceremony. Their community spirit and sharing were done within the traditional frame (law or habit) of their society.

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<sup>17</sup> I have observed throughout my tenure as a missionary with them that the Nuu-chah-nulth people are basically money-conscious.

#### **5.4.4 Disconnection from Traditional Social Structure**

However, changes in their overall economic activities caused them to feel disconnected from their traditional social structure. First, the economic changes brought a change in the relationship with *Ha'hoolthlii* (chief's territories), which brought about shifts in the relationship with *Ha'wiih* (chief), their social institution. New economy was also seen as environmental exploitation.<sup>18</sup> It was their chiefs' responsibility for the people not to take more than it was necessary, to actively caring to sustain the land and the sea. The change was gradual, but the fur trade period was often blamed for the start of this changed economic behaviour. Although the use of sea-otters' pelts, for example, was an exclusive right of the chiefs, they were harvested for commercial reasons (Inglis & Haggarty 2000:96). The disruption of the traditional pattern was also blamed for the shortage of resources and food (Inglis & Haggarty 2000:103).

#### **5.5 *Tloo-qwah-nah*: Communal Theatricality**

To continue with the main discussion, the traditional wolf dance ceremony was a ceremony that lasted several days on the stage throughout the village, which involved the staged plots, the main characters, the actors around them, and the whole village. The rituals of Nuu-chah-nulth always consisted of the communal dramas (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:94), and so, those who partake in them must seriously and meaningfully participate (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:95). The Nuu-chah-nulth people often smile about the exaggerated nature of their ceremonies.<sup>19</sup> But these ceremonies were important social institutions that held and maintained their society. A hereditary chief from a sub-division shared his understanding of their rituals:

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<sup>18</sup> The new economy was a concern that was often heard from an elder in Ahousaht.

<sup>19</sup> During a conversation with a tribal member in Hesquiaht.

They are of importance as part of cultural practices, along with the line of ceremonies performed in other religious cultures.<sup>20</sup>

As in other religious ceremonies, some degree of broad imagination and acting was required to give symbolic meaning. Baptism, the sacraments, and likewise Christian rituals require imagination, faith, and actions.

### 5.5.1 Stage One: Abduction of Children (Crises)

On the first night of *Tloo-qwah-nah*, the first highlight of the ceremony, immediately after the dinner feast, for which all members of the village were invited (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89), was the abduction of children (novices) by wolves.

In the afternoon, before the sun sets, the guests gathered at the house of the host, sang songs, and beat with a stick, as long as they wished.

#### 5.5.1.1 *Tse'ka* - Spirit Chant

The host gets up, raised a stick, and sang the *Tse'ka* (*čiiqaa*, spirit power) chant. This song was known to be used also for wolf rituals, as it was used in the memorial potlatch as studied in the previous chapter. The differences between Nuuchahnulth culture and religion were not very visible, but the use of *Tse'ka* always indicated that it was a religious ritual that required more seriousness. Following was an example of the *Tse'ka* (*čiiqaa*), which was sung at a Tseshah wolf ritual by a chief:

Stay on the beach, stay on the beach, you dentalia, so that the girls of different tribes may be without anything about the neck. *Hiyaaha* tribes, *hiyaaha*.

Tom, who was the grand chief of Tseshah, explained that this song was a gift-scramble song of the Hisaawista tribe<sup>21</sup> (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89). *Tse'ka* usually was a song of prayer, but in the example, it was used in games. The use of such songs in religious

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<sup>20</sup> From an interview with the late Chief of Ehatis, Fred Adams in 2015.

<sup>21</sup> Now known as Esowista, a part of Tla-o-qui-aht. Not officially included tribe of the NTC.

ceremonies, daily life, and even in their games, was a facade of their cultural texture. Nothing was carved in stone: spiritual was readily extended to ordinary life.

#### **5.5.1.2 Break-In**

At the end of the prayer chant (Ernst 1952:66), or any time during the reception party (*Tlee-dtsoo*) (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:90), men pretended as the wolves broke in the house where the feast took place. For this ceremony, they usually, but not always, hired four ceremonial wolves from the families of higher-ranking chiefs, two from the lower ranking chiefs. The wolves were chosen from among those men (wolves) who were previously initiated in the wolf dance society. They acted as abducting wolves.

The wolves that broke in through the walls wear cedar-bark headbands on their heads, black paint on their faces, and with a black blanket tied on their foreheads to wear them on their backs. Only the wolves of high rank among the wolf pack used wolf masks. When entering through the wall, the pack entered into the house in the order of rank and this rule cannot be broken (Ernst 1952:66). In the recent wolf ritual, usually during a potlatch, this stage was mostly announced, and no actual actors were usually present. Regardless of different methods used, the participants and audience tried to maintain their seriousness, as I observed their rituals in numerous occasions.

As soon as the wolves came in, designated men inside the house poured water and turned off the fire (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:66), and people scattered here and there, acting as fearful. Some of the guests asked, 'Who came in?' 'They are not the wolves but the dogs who came in to steal their children!'<sup>22</sup> (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:179). Mothers who brought little children hid them under a blanket as if they were afraid that wolves might

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<sup>22</sup> Frank Williams, who attended, as a young boy, Tom's big wolf ritual describes the scene of the wolf attack (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:179).

take their children away. The wolves crawled on the floor, roamed around the main floor of the house, and then finally left the house.

#### **5.5.1.3 Abduction**

The two watchmen (*witwat*), who were hired in advance, observed if there were any missing person, and announced the names of the children who were missing after the wolves have left. This stage was repeated once or twice. While this was happening, there was the crying of a mother who lost her child (Ernst 1952:67). The new initiates, who were chosen by the chiefs to be new members, were all abducted by the wolves. Sometimes, to add more excitement to the drama, the wolves abducted anyone from the guests and released them later as though they escaped (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:90-91). The abductees were fed deer meat during the capture but they were required to tell other children in the village that they ate 'raw deer meat' (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:179).

### **5.5.2 Stage Two: Trapping the Wolves**

Now the next stage was pre-arranged to show what happened in the village, starting in the night the new recruits were abducted by the wolves. Everything happened through the night was scripted, but at times during the process of such a ceremony, there could be unexpected spontaneous human emotions and feelings.

#### **5.5.2.1 Wailing**

When the night came, the cries of the women who lost their children were heard everywhere. Some recent wolf rituals made a prior arrangement with a few women in the audience to be the mourners. The mourners drove the ritual to an emotional climax. When the villagers heard the cries, they shook their bird-rattles to drive out the wolf spirit. Traditionally any villager participating in this part, including the wailers, received payment from the host.

The wailing tradition was a common practice among Indigenous groups in the North Pacific region. There were a special group of gifted people called ‘professional mourners’ (Craven 1968:16). When someone died the mourners, usually old women, with their ‘faces scratched and bleeding’ took turns ‘wailing day and night’ (Craven 1968:16).<sup>23</sup>

In many cultures around the world, it was women who were associated with wailing and known also as ‘wailers’ (Gamliel 2014:12). The wailing culture corresponded with women’s mourning patterns in many diverse societies, such as rural people in Greece (Holst-Warhaft 2002; Danforth 1982), Bedouins in Saudi Arabia (Abu-Lughod 2016), and Micronesians (Lutz 1988). Women connected the sorrow and suffering that wailing expressed with additional roles that they played in the life cycle – being a daughter, someone’s wife, a mother of children, and a grandmother of grandchildren (Gamliel 2014:13). In some culture, talented and professional wailers participated in mourning ‘for it is a religious obligation’ (Gamliel 2014:51).

#### **5.5.2.2 Wolves’ Howling and Crying Children**

When the grieving village finally went to bed, a wolf cry was heard four times. It was the leader of the wolf pack who had a whistle. The wolf cry was made with the whistle. The hissing of the whistle sound represented the spirit of the wolves. When the villagers heard the wolf cry, they got up again, singing *Tse’ka* (*’ciiqaa*) songs, shaking the bird-rattles to cast out the wolf spirit.

About this time, the children taken in the woods with the wolves cried out to their parents to rescue them. The children shouted out four times. The prayers with the songs and bird-rattles continued through the night until the daybreak. The wolves kept moving in the bushes not to be caught. The children were afraid while doing this, but because the

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<sup>23</sup> This tradition was observed and written about of the territory of the Kingcome Inlet, in the book, *When the Owl Cries* (Craven 1968).

purpose of *Tloo-qwah-nah* was to teach them courage and bravery, they must overcome their fear.

This ceremony usually took place before the boys reached puberty, but sometimes they did the rite of passage, preparing to be a man, together with *Tloo-qwah-nah*.

The next morning, the new initiates appeared in places where the villagers could see them. Even then, people tried to save them by trapping the wolves, but that effort was in vain. They appeared in the village four times and called out to their parents. The people in the village pretended to fight the wolves. After the new initiates were seized by some members, they were eventually led by the members to the house where the ceremony took place (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:179). The villagers finally fought off and sent away the abducting wolves to the bushes. From when the wolves abducted the new initiates, they painted black paint on their faces, and that must stay on their faces for the duration of this ceremony or longer.

At any point during this ceremony, the ritual could be realistic for some people who, for example, have recently lost a family member or experienced serious injury by the attack of an animal, or someone who gave an overly broad meaning to this ceremony, may confuse the difference between the drama and reality. The experience of young children leaving their homes and being under the care of others overnight could also be a source of emotional discomfort leading to confusion.

### **5.5.3 Stage Three: Seclusion by the Wolf Spirit**

At the ceremony house, the initiates who were brought back from the earlier abduction were overwhelmed by the wolf spirit (*č'ihnah*)<sup>24</sup> and became secluded. Gradually they were all overwhelmed (secluded) by the wolf spirit. In that state, they were brought to the

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<sup>24</sup> In Tom's Big Wolf Ritual recorded in Sapir and Swadesh's Native Accounts of Nootka Ethnography, the Wolf Spirit was called the Quartz (Sapir & Swadesh 1955).

centre of the ceremony house and covered with a blanket. This stage of the plot marked the ending of the abduction of the children. However, they were now overpowered by the spirit of the Wolf. As the new initiates appeared in the ceremony house, each came with a whistle and *č'ihnah* (the spirit) which symbolize their seclusion by the wolf spirit (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:94).

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the 'adaptation of the spirit' (5.1) was made here. They thought they gained strength by encountering the spirit, but here they spoke of God. The word *č'ihnah*, in dictionary sense, was a spirit quest, which was quite distant from the ghosts and miscellaneous spirits they commonly thought of. The spirit *č'ihnah* was a spirit deity whose purpose was only to serve a clear communal goal, which was understood as a necessary concept to convey the meaning of the Holy Spirit of Christianity. This idea was discussed further in the next section (5.6).

Sapir's records specified that, up to this point of the ceremony, the communal drama was open for all villagers. But the next stage of 'the exorcizing the ghost' (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:100) became the part where they, sometimes, specifically refer to as 'the wolf ritual.' Only the members of the wolf society were allowed in this stage.

#### ***5.5.3.1 Masked Procession and Calming of Wolf Spirit***

The newly recruited members of the Society for the Wolf Dance chose to wear various kinds of animal masks and performed the last festive dance, in circle, where they imitated and danced to the symbolic animals of their masks. This was part of the celebration and is aimed at 'claming of the spirits'. This stage comprises the mask dances, *oo-shin'nek*, or 'the imitative dances' (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:94) performed by *Tloo-qwah-nah* members. The new initiates were told on the fifth morning which the masks they are going to wear. The animal masks they wear represent the spirits who participated in the masked procession. The following masks were used in the Tseshah *Tloo-qwah-nah* (Ernst 1952:74-75):



|                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| <i>Wolf</i>           | <i>Sa-la-kooch'sim</i> , Crawling Wolf mask. This is used traditionally on the fifth day, seldom earlier. A blanket is worn with this.                                |
| <i>Raven</i>          | A black mask, always the same, worn with blanket.   |
| <i>Eagle</i>          | Same as elsewhere.  |
| <i>Thunderbird</i>    | Resembles the Eagle mask, but with a longer bill, and a low crest. As elsewhere, it belongs to an incidental dance in the masked procession of <i>Tloo-qwah-nah</i> . |
| <i>Pokomis</i>        | No mask, but with facial and body painting.   |
| <i>Hornet</i>         | These wear hemlock boughs on their heads and carry needles, with which they stick people. Hornets make a buzzing sound and wear no mask.                              |
| <i>Rat</i>            | Cedar-bark headdress. The dancer imitates the animal.   |
| <i>Saw-Bill Duck</i>  | Forehead mask painted black and red. Black shawl or small blanket. The arms are shaken continually. They make the cry, 'Huk-huk-huk.'                                 |
| <i>Oyster Catcher</i> | <i>Kwa-kweep'</i> . Mask with long beak like crow, painted red.   |
| <i>Crane</i>          | Grey mask sharp long bill.  |
| <i>Sea Gull</i>       | White mask or headdress like the bird.  |
| <i>Grizzly Bear</i>   | Mask like the head of the animal, worn with bear skin.  |
| <i>Robin</i>          | Small red mask.   |

|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <i>Woodpecker</i>                | Red mask. Red blanket on the chest. Mimetic dance.  |
| <i>Racoon</i>                    | Grey mask, with a black stripe across the eyes. Dancer move very slowly, peering about, then climb high in the houses.  |
| <i>Panther</i>                   | Mask in outline of panther's head, worn with the skin of the animal. The Panther Dance is called <i>Sa'nek</i> .  |
| <i>Wild Man</i>                  | <i>Ach'mako</i> . The largest mask of all. He has jutting eye brows, a large nose, and a tubular mouth. Wild Man is a bad spirit. <i>Ach'mako</i> wears a bear skin and plays with it all the time. |
| <i>Basket Woman</i>              | <i>E-ish-su'ish</i> . She wears no mask but carries a basket and also wears a black bear skin.  |
| <i>Wolf with the Broken leg.</i> | <i>Kwahkwah'he</i> . Another wolf mask but has a stick in his hand and plays as if he has a broken leg.   |
| <i>Lightening Serpent.</i>       | <i>Ha-et'lik</i> . A favourite mask of the sacred dance of <i>Tloo-qwah-nah</i> . It dances like a wolf, always next to the Thunderbird.  |

The masked procession and dances were about the 'taming' or 'calming' of the wolf spirit. The final dance, *Che-was'up*, joined again by the entire village, was the final exorcizing of the wolf spirit from the initiates. The main features in the *Che-was'up* dance were the ceremonial washing of the faces and the driving out of the '*č'ihnah*,' and the final silencing of the whistle (Ernst 1952:77).

### 5.5.3.2 *Becoming Wolf Warriors*

This step was given special importance in the plot since the casting out the wolf spirit means to receive the power as wolf warriors. To elevate the seriousness, the new initiates were told to eat only certain food during this time and given the list of rules to keep (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:181). They were also told the specific consequences of not following the rules. There were things their parents should not do during this time. For example, they could not make baskets, canoes, nor pedals (Ernst 1952:68). This period was a time of sacred occasion, so they were punished when they did not obey the rule. For instance, they were told that if the new initiates were not keeping their faces painted black for one year, their grandparents were to be speared in their belly. After a year when they had the ‘Wolf Ritual Return’ feast, the wolves came back to tell them not to have ‘black-painted faces any longer (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:181). The prescription of warnings after a ritual to the ritual participants was a common practice in the Nuu-chah-nulth tradition (n.11).

In their records, Sapir and Swadesh gave a concise account of *Tloo-qwah-nah*. The main features described were the crawling-dancing of the wolf spirit at the house, the seclusion, and the parts of self-torture for the training of valour (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:135). The host of the feast, Tom (*Naweik*) (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:89-120), danced the ‘eagle imitative dance’ in the first evening's masked procession. He also gave (potlatched) many gifts to the guests while having a feast. It said that this potlatch was his second one. Then, he performed a crawling dance and sang the crawling dance song:

*wahl lihtsiyaey*

*kamaetla kikomaay o*

*hayya hayya eo...*

*ahi yaaa...hi...yo*

*hayyaw hayyaw ho ho*

The words of this song were of *Kwakiutl*, according to Sapir and Swadesh, but the meaning was unknown. A crawling dance represented a wolf spirit and was used in connection with the wolf ritual when wealth was to be distributed (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:226). The dance routine was performed four times. They had a habit of repeating everything four times. He sang two songs during this dance, and the first song was:

*hahiya.. heahiya...*

*haahi... heya... hi*

*hayyaw hayyaw hoho.*

This second song, accompanying the last two circuits of the wolf dancer, consisted apparently of burdens only. It belonged with the preceding song.

He then danced a *kimtlkimtla*<sup>25</sup> of the Naowaath tribe:

*yayaehehe... ye...hongo...we*

*What will you Wolf Ritual members do?*

*Will you spear?*

*yaayae... aaa... hiya hiya...*

*I alone was visited by the Wolf Ritual Crazy Spirit.*

They were setting up the thing called the Crazy Spirit.

*yangangangaw... hahew...*

*hohoongo ... yii... we*

*yangganga*

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<sup>25</sup> This and the two flowing songs make a set of three, of the type known as *kimtlkimtla*. They accompany a masked dance in which the dancer steps as though about to fall first on one side, then on the other, as though balancing himself. The left foot is kept in front of the right, the two hopping together in time to a fairly rapid beat (Sapir & Swadesh 1939:227).

*My house is fear-inspiring because it has something supernatural walk  
waiyaya hiiyay...*

It was a song about self-torture, for having a spear stuck into one's body.

However much their lives were surrounded with the presence of spirits, the general feeling toward any spirit for them was 'fearful' or 'reverent' Nuu-chah-nulth people believed that any exposure to the spirit of a dead person could cause harm or illness, for the precise reason why they did not handle a dead relative's body, as discussed in Chapter Four (4.6). During a family ceremony which I took a ceremonial part, at the village of Kyuquot, of laying ashes of a family member in the sea the culture work warned the daughter of the deceased who was involved in the ceremony and performed a cleansing ritual, *Yaht-yahtsa*.<sup>26</sup>

The occasions, in their modern ceremonial practice, for the potlatch staging the whole feature of *Tloo-qwah-nah* was rarely seen, except when a transfer of a grand chief's privileges to his children occurred. Sometimes they had *Tloo-qwah-nah* in their children's honour when he or she was assuming a new name and new hereditary rights. Jewitt, an infamous captive at Mowachaht village, accounted, in his journal<sup>27</sup> that Chief Maquinna, his slave master, staged a *Tloo-qwah-nah* and gave away gifts 'in the honour of his son *Sat-sat-sok-sis* (Smith 1974:80). The young son of Maquinna danced the first wolf dance (*tloo-qwah-nah*) in the potlatch, as Maquinna himself was acting as a chorister and the women applauded each feat of activity of the dancer by repeating the words, *Wocash! Wocash Tyee!* Translated meaning: Good! Very good, Prince!' (1974:80). This scene was familiar and to be found in the modern potlatches. *Tloo-qwah-nah* was used as a religious

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<sup>26</sup> I personally participated and performed a Christian ritual of reading a scripture passage and praying, along with a Kyuquot culture worker, in the ritual. The mixed ritual of Indigenous and Christian traditions is common modern practice in Nuuchahnulth society.

<sup>27</sup> The Adventures and Sufferings of John R. Jewitt, A Captive among the Nootka 1803-1805.

ceremony, to signify the religious importance, for transferring hereditary properties and family honour (Drucker 1951:366).

### 5.5.3.3 *Wolf Dance Songs*

They passed down the songs used in wolf dance ceremonies from one generation to another. And the possession of the song was an important legacy to the descendants who inherited them.

Susie Weberhard, a Makah woman, who first owned a song, *Yaq<sup>w</sup>áyats'ík*. She gave the song to her three daughters, Ruth A. Swan, Matilda McCarty, and Katy Hunter. They were all Ucluelet and somehow related to one another. But no one remembered the song. One of the current owners, Helma Swan, said that the word *Yaq<sup>w</sup>áyats'ík* means 'Wolf' in Clayoquot language, and they were Canadian words, as compared to Makah. In the past, this song was used only in *λuk<sup>w</sup>aali*<sup>28</sup> ceremony, now it was performed in other feasts. Helma continued to perform this song at feasts and always explained that the song was owned by three people (Goodman 2003:210-211).

The words of a wolf song (*Tse'ka*) in the twentieth century, recorded by a Nuu-chah-nulth elder are: 'The wolves are howling, let this be a pleasant day' – when the howling was a good omen for the ceremony (King 1999:138).

### 5.5.4 *Wolf*

Wolf was considered a 'sacred' animal by the Nuu-chah-nulth. The names of the wolves used in the sacred winter ceremonials were considered sacred, compared to profane names (Hoover & Museum 2000:164). Wolves and thunderbirds were central to the Nuu-chah-nulth thought, and the ability of creatures to transform from one state to another was

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<sup>28</sup> *λuk<sup>w</sup>aali* is Wolf Dance in Clayoquot dialect. A variation of *λuq<sup>w</sup>aana* (*Tloo-qwah-nah*) (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991:133).

the fundamental aspect of the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview, as in the case of the Raven, as discussed in Chapter Three. Killer whales, *Kakawis*, became wolves when they left the water (Sapir & Swadesh 1955:92). Thunderbirds were transforming supernatural creatures. Wolves were so prominent in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture and rituals that wolf symbolism was used in the design of their whaling canoes and artefacts (Hoover & Museum 2000:312). Carved features on some Nuu-chah-nulth artefacts suggested possession by wolf spirits (*č'ihnah*).<sup>29</sup>

Nuu-chah-nulth people believed that wolves were 'very powerful' and used to 'take the spirit of a dead chief to the other side.'<sup>30</sup> When they witnessed wolves in their ceremonial, they felt 'a sense of protection, belonging, and even peace.' They believed in the power in wolves and that 'nothing can go wrong' with these 'sacred animals.' In their cultural teachings, wolves were regarded as 'sacred guardians who protected their land and people.'

The Nuu-chah-nulth believed that the chiefs relied on and received strength from the wolves for their governing. How they governed and how their communities existed often involved the chief who was the centre of all attention. Chiefs would bring out their wolves as they governed. The wolves were law and order of governance because the wolves had the quality that the chiefs must have to govern their people.

## 5.6 Nuu-chah-nulth Concept of Transformation

Nuu-chah-nulths knew that only in the stories of their ancestors could the form, appearance, or structure of the story characters be transformed. They imagined if they could, but they were content to imagine it in the story their grandfathers told on a long

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<sup>29</sup> Yew club from the Cook collection. A carved wolf head and three human heads decorated with human hair (Hoover & Museum 2000:261).

<sup>30</sup> During the memorial potlatch, recorded in Chapter Four, my cultural interpreter Luke Swan told me.

winter story night. They could not metamorphose like the animals in the stories, but they wanted to experience different transformation.

A Nuu-chah-nulth woman, in a written interview, reiterated the legend of *Ha-Sass*, similar to the original legend, emphasizing the redemptive aspect of the story:

In the time of great despair, when thousands of people were dying from diseases, a man who had a family of fifteen and left to save them. He came upon a cave overlooking the water and yet hidden away from others. He hid there and absorbed a wolf den below them, he watched how they survived. They followed their ways and flourished. They honour this dance and never forget and respect each person if they are angry at a person, go and talk to that person. Hence, the *glu-gwaa-na* came to be. The shawl dance is a prayer to the Creator, hands open, feet planted on the floor, to say *Klecko* (thank you) for life always. *Chuu!*<sup>31</sup>

To remember this reality of which they were helped by the wolves was to be empowered by the spirit *Ĉ'ihnaḥ*. To the woman, *glu-gwaa-na* (*tloo-qwah-nah*) was a 'prayer to the Creator.' They needed a story of their past to continue receiving grace and power from the Creator. The tribal story of redemption was absolutely necessary to bring about the Creator's continued mercy. The wolf dance ceremony was their prayer. This story could be help them imagine the story of Jesus Christ's redemptive grace that continues to evoke us to give us hope and courage in life. The wolf dance ceremony, in its story and performance, was the spiritual ceremony of their transformation. As they encountered with the spirit *ĉ'ihnaḥ* of such powerful and courageous wolves, they believed that the transformation occurred. They characterized in their belief of the animal, wolves were powerful, wise, swift, spiritual, and protective of them. By the inspiration of the wolves, they draw strength and power to overcome the adversities of life.

The kidnapping of the boys in the ritual symbolizes the crisis facing the tribe. The cries of mothers for the boys epitomize the grim reality they often face in their individual and communal life.

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<sup>31</sup> In the interview with an Ahousaht woman.



As well, the ritual is about the emasculation of the boys, of another transforming aspect. The captured boys acquired bravery through various difficulties during the period of abduction and come out drunk in the spirit of wolves when they escape with the help of villagers. The boys who gained courage through tough experiences became a different level of men who now had the spirit (*č'ihnah*) internally.

The Nuu-chah-nulth transformation required the adaptation of the spirit (*č'ihnah*). A chief before going out hunting for whales disappear into the quiet forest alone, bathing, praying and fasting for four days, making sure that he has enough courage and assurance from the spirit (*č'ihnah*). The expectation from the prayer rituals was the assurance of guidance and protection of the spirit (*č'ihnah*) on the dangerous journey of the whale hunt.

When I visited the Indigenous village for the very first time with a dozen Asian-American youths, a village elder one morning saw us doing a militaristic exercise on the beach early in the morning. The elder said, 'We used to work out early in the morning like that when we were young, but it's hard to see this in these days of our youth. They are out of the spirit.' And he said if we visit the village more often, the young indigenous people in the village will return to the spirit.<sup>32</sup> There was a need for bravery and strength when they had to face frequent tribal wars in the past, but now as they fight for the cultural survival of the tribe, so transformations are imperative.

After Jesus died, the lives of Christians in the New Testament had to be lived "in the Holy Spirit." The wolf dance *tloo-qwah-nah* was to see a symbolic meaning of life in the Holy Spirit and could convey the Christian faith to Nuu-chah-nulths. The Holy Spirit played a key role in the Pauline epistles and Apostle Paul's pneumatology was closely connected to his theology and Christology, to the point of being almost inseparable from

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<sup>32</sup> This was from my personal conversation with the Elder Louie Frank, Sr. during our first visit to Ahousaht in the mid 1980s.

them (Gräbe 2008: 248-249). Equally, the success of the Nuu-chah-nulth life was guaranteed when they stayed in the spirit (*č'ihnah*).

### **5.8 Spirit Traditions in Nuu-chah-nulth and Old Testament**

The study attempted to approach the cultural idea of *č'ihnah* with the OT concept of *rûah* in this section. In studying the religious development of old tribal cultures, particularly as comparing the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of the spirit and the development of the idea of the spirit in the OT Hebrew, common patterns emerge, and, thus, connection could be made between the spirit (*rûah*) in the OT text and the spirit (*č'ihnah*). In order to fully comprehend the holy spirit in the Nuu-chah-nulth theology, a conceptual bridge between their cultural conception of the spirit, with its benevolent characteristics, and the biblical idea of 'holy' must be established.

The study explored whether the Nuu-chah-nulth focus of balance and harmony could offer a consistent idea of the concept of holiness in the Bible. This pursuit was particularly interesting because the Nuu-chah-nulth idea of the purpose of engaging the spirit coheres with the moral idea of the society to which it belongs. The Nuu-chah-nulth notion of the spirit was formed by how they employ the spirit in rituals and ceremonies, and the expected and fixed outcomes from the engagement determined how they construed the idea of 'holy.'

The holiness practically defined for the OT Hebrew tribe was the moral laws shaped by Moses' Ten Commandment. The laws were to bring righteousness of their tribal society. The Nuu-chah-nulth's moral law also could be summed up in their conception of the state of balance and harmony. If the engagement with the spirit (*rûah*) by the OT Hebrew people was to reach a holy and optimal society, the adaptation of the spirit (*č'ihnah*) in *tloo-qwah-nah* was for an integrated whole for individuals and community. It was Harvie Conn, an evangelical missiologist, who said cultures are also the means of God's common grace. Through his providential control, God uses the shaping of human

cultures to check the rampant violence of evil and preserve human continuity’ (Conn 2000: 254).

### 5.8.1 Č’iḥnaḥ (the Spirit) in Nuu-chah-nulth

The Nuu-chah-nulth word *č’iḥnaḥ* meant ‘a spirit quest’ according to the *T’aat’aaqsapa* Cultural Dictionary (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991: 164). The word appeared to be a derivative of the word *č’iḥaa* meaning ‘ghost or monster’ (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991: 135-136). Adding the suffix ‘nah (we)’ to the root was their grammatical use to specify a general idea, as it was seen in the word ‘*tloo-qwah-nah* (remember-reality-we)’ earlier (Atleo 2004: 80). By adding ‘nah’ to *č’iḥaa* becomes the word *č’iḥnaḥ* which changes the meaning from ‘ghost or monster’ to a spirit or the spirit.

| <i>Č’iḥaa</i>                   | Adding the suffix ‘nah’ | <i>Č’iḥnaḥ</i>       |
|---------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|
| Ghost or monster (mere spirits) | Means we, our, or us    | Spirit or the spirit |
| Mere spirits                    | Our spirit              | The spirit           |

**Table 5.1: Grammatical Evidence of the Idea of The Spirit in Nuu-chah-nulth**

Here, the morphology of the word *č’iḥaa* (mere spirits, ghost) compared with the word *č’iḥnaḥ* (the spirit), as well as the distinctive meanings of each word, while sharing the same etymological roots, established that the Nuu-chah-nulths had a unique cultural understanding of the spirit, which deconstructed the old culture theory that only animistic spirits existed in Indigenous cultures.

Moreover, the cultural use of the word ‘quest’ gave the notion of intentional engagement and escalated the meaning of *č’iḥnaḥ* (the spirit) to be distinguished from other ghostly spirits (*č’iḥaa*). They believed that animals, trees and plants have spirits inside them. But the spirit (*č’iḥnaḥ*) whom they engaged in ceremonies or prayer ritual was a different class of spirit, distinguished from ordinary spirits (*č’iḥaa*).

The previous section of the chapter highlighted the word *ḥiina* (the spirit)<sup>33</sup> equated with the wolf spirit in *Tloo-qwah-nah*. The steady appearance of the spirit conveyed in *č'ihnah* or *ḥiina* (the spirit) substantiated the evidence of the cultural idea of the spirit *č'ihnah* in the Nuu-chah-nulth thought world.

Besides, the word the spirit *č'ihnah* was never expressed in plural form suggested that the spirit (*č'ihnah*) a culturally constructed, religious, ceremonial, and monolithic entity. Thus, it pointed to a class of spirit that could bridge the idea of the holy spirit.

A human spirit was not called *č'ihnah*, either. The *T'aat'aagsapa* word for a spirit of the human was *quḡačaqstim* (Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council 1991: 213).

| names of spirit    | original meaning      | applied meanings |
|--------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| <i>č'ihaa</i>      | ghosts or monsters    | spirits          |
| <i>č'ihnah</i>     | a spirit quest        | the spirit       |
| <i>ḥiina</i>       | crystal               | the spirit       |
| <i>quḡačaqstim</i> | the spirit of a human | a human spirit   |

**Table 5.2: Names of Different Spirits in Nuu-chah-nulth**

### 5.6.1 *Ḥiina*

Besides *č'ihnah*, *ḥiina*<sup>34</sup> was used to refer to the spirit. The ethnographers Philip Drucker and A.H. Ernst used *ḥiina* for the spirit (Ernst 1952: 68; 71). The use of *ḥiina* for the spirit pointed to the unique and unsynchronized cultural developments in each village. The reason for the use of *ḥiina* for the spirit was that certain sub-divisions shared a family legend of the ancestral hero who found a magic crystal (quartz) in a deep cave on a mountain and passed down the family beliefs that the spirit was inside the crystal. Both *č'ihnah* and *ḥiina* meant the same since they were culturally constructed to deliver the same meaning, the spirit.<sup>35</sup> The *T'aat'aagsapa* Cultural Dictionary listed the word *ḥiina*

<sup>33</sup> Ernst used *ḥiina* instead of *č'ihnah*. Both mean 'the spirit.'

<sup>34</sup> *Ḥiina* is often denoted as *Häina* in these documents.

<sup>35</sup> From an interview with an Ehatis informant.

only as ‘crystal,’ under the headings of two sub-tribal dialects. Despite its common use in the past, the Nuu-chah-nulth did not use it for the spirit.

### 5.6.2 Č’ihnaḥ - The Spirit

As it was implied earlier, the spirit (č’ihnaḥ) was without an independent personality. The spirit in the OT in its early stage of development likewise had no independent personality either, not until it related to God, e.g., the Spirit of the Lord (MA 1999).

As a contrast, in *oo-shin’nek*, the mask procession, each animal mask displayed spirit, movement, and behaviour of the respective animal. These spirits exhibited individual personalities, mimicking the movement and behavior of the animals, and showing their personality. The fact that the mask procession included characters like ‘Boogeyman’ and monster-like creatures indicated that those spirits were lesser class, č’ihaa. But the spirit who engaged in the ceremonial rituals were higher class spirit, č’ihnaḥ (the spirit). The č’ihnaḥ was engaged in delivering good will of the community. But it remained as an impersonal force.

### 5.6.3 Benevolent to Holy

Then, the spirit perceived in Nuu-chah-nulth thought was to be a benevolent spirit. The expectation attached to engaging an adaptation of the spirit was a positive outcome. In *Tloo-qwah-nah*, the eventual out was to be a spiritual transformation to lead to the balance and harmony in their life.

The idea of the balance and harmony could be like the biblical concept of holiness. The biblical concept of holiness was from the idea of consecration. The Nuu-chah-nulth idea of holiness was to reach a balance and harmony. The work of the spirit and reaching the balance and harmony of the community cohered. In this way, the Nuu-chah-nulth could understand the Holy Spirit.

#### 5.6.4 *Rûah* (Spirit) in the Old Testament

The Hebrew word *rûah* was used for ‘spirit’ in the Old Testament. But the primary meaning of the word is wind. The word was used for the slight breeze (Psalm 78:39), the storm wind (Isaiah 32:2), the whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), and the scorching wind (Psalm 11:6 NRSV), and more. The word used for wind, a natural force, occurs 113 times mainly in the book of Genesis and Exodus, the earlier part of the OT. The same word is used for ‘breath’ and ‘life’ in the subsequent sections of the OT. This difference readily indicates that the idea of the spirit (*rûah*) evolved over time. There is a stereotypical pattern in the idea of the divine spirit that simply can be assumed without specific reference (Kapelrud 1977-78: 40-47).

The ideas of the spirit (*rûah*) in the OT scripture, especially in the periods around the exile of the Israelites; pre-exilic, exilic, and postexilic, was refined and spiritualized as they progressed in time (Ma 1999). Ma summarized six distinctive characteristics of the spirit tradition in the OT: leadership spirit, prophetic spirit, creation spirit, spirit as God’s independent agent, spirit as part of God’s person or sign of God’s presence, and spirit of practically a substitute for God. The evolution of the spirit was evident in this study: in the earlier tradition, the spirit was typified as related to the transformation of the agricultural or natural world, but later developed to be more spiritual ones.

The use of the spirit (*rûah*) in the text was closer to the Holiness of God as the texts showed the vital role of Yahweh’s spirit and affecting the moral life of people, but, limited to the pastoral needs of a suffering and frustrated community (Ma 1999: 146). Here, the context between the Spirit of God and the nature of holiness seems to stem from pastoral care for the moral and ethical balance of the people and their communities they pursued.

| Spirit                |                  |                                 |
|-----------------------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Original Terms        | <i>Rûah</i> (OT) | <i>Č’ihnah</i> (Nuu-chah-nulth) |
| Semantic Relationship | is a kind of     | is a kind of                    |
| Cover term            | The Spirit       | The Spirit                      |

| Context                       | OT Scripture   | Oral/cultural records   |
|-------------------------------|--|---|
| Applied                       | God (136 times)<br>Persons or animals, including living persons (129 times) <sup>36</sup>  | Animals<br>Physical objects<br>(never applied to people) <sup>37</sup>  |
| Primitive/<br>natural meaning | Wind (Gen.1:2; 3:8; Exo. 10:13; 14:21, etc.)<br>Breath, breath of people, life (Isa.42:5; Ezek. 37:9-10; Job 19:17, etc.)  | Energy<br>Life force  |
| Later meanings<br>later       | Vital power (prov. 18:14; Psalm 34:18), Strength, spirit of a person (Judges 15: 18-19)<br>Human emotions, of surprise (1Kings 10:5), of surprise or anger (Job 15:13) | Quartz (magic crystal)<br>Wolf spirit ( <i>Tloo-qwah-nah</i> ) and other animal spirits in <i>oo-shin'nek</i> |
| Meaning as Holy Spirit        | The Spirit of Yahweh, The spirit of the Lord (Psalm 33:6)  | The spirit  |

**Table 5.3: Comparison of Uses of Terms for Spirit**

### 5.7 Holy Spirit in Nuuchahnulth Context

The conceptual development of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament as well as in the Nuuchahnulth religious tradition shows no indication that they bore the direct relation to the idea of the Trinity of God. The Triune nature of God, God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, was later revealed in the New Testament. The theological idea of the person of the Holy Spirit is later culminated in the New Testament, through various intertestamental evolutions, including the Qumran texts. As indicated in Table 5.3, there is no earlier cultural/textual evidence to *č'ihnah* (the spirit) associated with *N'aas* (God) or to holiness. The biblical idea of the spirit is enhanced as it relates to the canonical text (Ma 1999). Since the cultural narratives of the Nuuchahnulth has no canonical text to tie to, their idea of the Holy Spirit should then be found in the relationship between the pursuit of

<sup>36</sup> The word *Rûah* appears 389 times in the OT.

<sup>37</sup> Nuuchahnulths call deal ancestors who appeared in their ceremonial rituals 'ancients.'

values by the community and the practical role and influence of the spirit (*č'iḥnaḥ*) to them. The influence they seek from the spirit were valour to the warriors, determination to the leader, affirmation before an important event in life, and needed wisdom to the chief. To sum up all these, it is to achieve balance and harmony in their society through spirit.

Understandably, being helped by the spirit is the same as being ministered by the Holy Spirit as in the Christian tradition. Since, also, the Greek NT word for the Holy Spirit *parakletos* (παράκλητος),<sup>38</sup> means 'advocate, helper' or literally means 'to come alongside,' it can closely mean as the 'adaptation of the spirit,' as seen in the wolf ritual. Thus, the Nuu-chah-nulth can draw a parallel understanding that the spiritual prayer practices and due transformations sought in the lives of ordinary Christians are also equal to the prayer ritual and its outcomes pursued by the Nuu-chah-nulths.

## 5.8 Conclusion

Tribal hero mythology became a dance re-enactment ceremony which brought about the transformation in the spiritual reality of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. For many years they put on ever-changing cultural clothing and fusing newly emerging ideas in this ritual ceremony and developed it as their social system. At the core of this ceremony, however, was about their spiritual transformation.

The French Structuralist, Levi-Strauss, pointed out that there was religiosity in the fundamental structure of the human race. The religiosity was attributed to human imperfection (Levi-Strauss 1963). Psychological anthropology was the view that religion was in human psychology (Glazier 1999). Thus, when we derive from religious phenomena or expressions from the inner side of human beings, religion formed from

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<sup>38</sup> *Parakletos* first appears in John 14: 16, as a composite koine Greek word of *para* (alongside) and *kalein* (to call) which translated 'holy spirit' in English New Testament.



human faith in transcendental matters. Human inevitability prompted dependence on religious phenomena such as the worship of heaven and the sun. When a culture finds and perceives animals, plants, rocks, rivers, or some human handiwork as animated and alive, possessing a distinct spiritual essence, it was once defined as animism. Their transformation by adaptation of the spirit extends beyond the dance ritual itself but involves the face painting, the spirit song, masks, imitative dance choreographies, wailing, and the drama.

Just as Moses in the Old Testament encountered the Hebrew God Yahweh in the burning bush and made Him the source of their power, and as the miraculous tales experienced on the desert journey to their destination of Canaan had been promised to the Hebrews, the *Tloo-qwah-nah* wolf ritual was chosen to be the Nuu-chah-nulth story from which the Nuu-chah-nulths drew power for new challenges, and transformed. Hence, the ritual of *Tloo-qwah-nah* was about spiritual transformation. The legend was re-enacted in all the territories of Nuu-chah-nulth as a means of remembering and finding again the powers and insights gained for their communities. The wolf ritual was their religion.

This symbolic ritual was a cultural event of the society in which the tribe adapted to the spirit of wolves and sought the necessary transformations to survive, and also a religious act of the tribe that gave them new strengths and abilities. Wolves were the animals that symbolized the power and wisdom that appeared in their hero myths, but what they actually pursued was the Holy Spirit: they sought transformation by the Holy Spirit. The ideal of transformation pursued by Nuu-chah-nulths was not a concept unfamiliar to the concept of the Holy Spirit.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The discussions in this chapter are to study the impact of the residential school in the formation of a Christian understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth people. The primary aim of the chapter is to address the research sub-question: ‘How do historical contact and experiences from colonial residential school influence their view of Christianity?’ Indigenous people in Canada came in close contact with the Christian religion during the colonial period. The Indian residential school system in Canada was a network of boarding schools for Indigenous peoples, funded by the Canadian government's Department of Indian Affairs and administered by Christian churches. Since its first establishment in the mid-1800s, Indigenous peoples attended residential schools over a hundred years, and their Christian identities were formed and influenced by their experience of their residential school. In this chapter, the sought to understand how their experience at residential schools influenced their understanding of Christianity.

#### **6.2 Background**

During several stages of contact with Europeans, changes occurred in the lives of the Nuu-chah-nulth. After the period of the lucrative fur trade in the initial contact period,

commercial expansion and operation of the Hudson's Bay company<sup>1</sup> started on the West coast. Political measures also accompanied commercial expansion.

Missionary activities began in 1875 with a Roman Catholic priest at Hesquiaht. By the 1890s a number of Roman Catholic missions were established in the mid-West coast of Vancouver Island. The Anglicans and Methodists also began their activities.

Residential schools were established in the late 1800s. The education policy of the colonial government and the residential schools compulsorily removed children from their families. This caused dissonant family relationships and weakened traditional institutions. Through the residential school, the children came into contact with the Christian faith. Residential schools served as a conduit through which a brand of Western education and civilization was brought to the Indigenous people.

### **6.2.1 Early Contact**

The Nuu-chah-nulth people encountered early European visitors for the first time in 1774. This period was generally known as the Fur-Trade Period (1774-1849). It was often established that where the European civilizations extended its dominance over areas occupied by Indigenous populations, the Indigenous populations declined, and the culture disintegrated. But the historical allegation that the Spanish occupation of Yuquot<sup>2</sup> and Cook's visit to the Nootka Sound, and the resulting fur trade, was regarded as an invasion against the Nuu-chah-nulth people and had pervasive harmful effects on the Nuu-chah-nulth, has little factual support. The fur trade brought the wealth to the Yuquot village

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<sup>1</sup> A fur trading company. Incorporated in 1670 as The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay. Also, functioned as a de facto government during the period of the fur trade. Still exist as a Canadian retail business group (Toronto, Ontario, Canada).

<sup>2</sup> Yuquot, also called Friendly Cove, is one the 14 Nuu-chah-nulth reserves, located at the mouth of Tahsis Inlet, Nootka Sound.

and Chief Maquinna<sup>3</sup> who condoned such commercial activities in the region (Mozino 1970: 91; Smith 1974).

The wealth also enriched the ceremonial life to the Yuquot people. The wealth accumulated by the fur trade and the supply of trade goods received from the Spanish Navy gave Yuquot economic advantages over other sub-tribes in the region during this period. More wealth meant more and bigger potlatches and a more active ceremonial life (Wike 1951: 102; Smith 1974: 51-3).

As the sea otter population decreased and became scarce in the Nootka Sound (Yuquot), fur-traders moved to the other regions on the Northwest coast. In 1795, the Spaniards finally left Yuquot. The Yuquot people who enjoyed the direct supply of trade goods from Spain were disappointed at their departure.<sup>4</sup> During the first half of the nineteenth century, the West coast received only sporadic visits from European ships.

### **6.2.2 Colonial Period**

The colonial period<sup>5</sup> in British Columbia and Vancouver Island extended from 1849 to 1871, before Confederation. The colonial period was marred by a few unfortunate events in Canadian history. The Western regions of Canada became an official colony of the imperial government in 1849. Three events shape this period: the loss of culture and population; the land treaty; and the Federal Indian Education Policy.

At the onset of the colonial period, the Indigenous population was declining in numbers, such that they would cease within a couple of generations (Duff 1997: 87). With

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<sup>3</sup> Chief Maquinna has been known as a powerful chief of Mowachaht (Yuquot) sub-tribe of Nuuchahnulth, who, sometimes, was referred to as King Maquinna. A British metal-smith, John R. Jewitt, who was his captured companion (slave) for three years after the ship that he sailed to the area had burnt down and other crews had been killed, recorded the detailed account of his conducts and character in his published journal (Smith 1974).

<sup>4</sup> This was told by Christine Jules of Kyuquot during my visit to her village.

<sup>5</sup> As contact with white Europeans on the native cultural soil had varying degrees of impact it is best to divide the contact periods into three: 1. The Fur-Trade Period (1774-1849), 2. The Colonial Period (1849-1871), and, 3. The Period Since Confederation (Duff 1997: 73).

rampant migrations from Europe, the disease was introduced to the indigenous population who had no immunity to resist and became an epidemic which almost wiped out the population (Decker 1988: 12-13).

The massive scale of assimilation did not occur during this period, but the Indigenous people underwent changes. This was attributed to the huge loss of population. The traditional arts and technology were no longer in use. Their economy changed, and their old forms of social and ceremonial life disappeared. The Indigenous leaders understood that in signing the treaty certain lands would be secured for their use and occupancy and their subsistence activities would be protected both inside and outside of their reservation boundaries. But they were not pleased by the ways in which these terms were delivered.

### **6.2.3 The Federal Indian Education Policy**

The colonial government introduced the Federal Indian Education Policy to the Indigenous people in the mid-1800s in Canada. The purpose was to maintain their political, economic and social control over the Indigenous population. As the outcome of the policy, the government established the first industrial school in Western Canada in 1883, to teach the Indigenous people industrial agriculture. The government's aim was to rapidly assimilate the Indigenous children into the emerging agricultural commercial economy (Enns 2009: 102).

#### ***6.2.3.1 Development of the Federal Indian Education Policy***

The colonial government policy towards Indigenous people oscillated between leaving them alone, attempting to help them survive in 'white men's world,' and assimilating them completely (Catholic Insight 2006: 38). In 1894, ten years after the establishment of the first industrial agriculture school in Western Canada,<sup>6</sup> Joseph Martin, a Liberal

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<sup>6</sup> The Qu'Appelle School run by the Oblate Order of the Roman Catholic Church

member of Parliament, addressed the impropriety of the denominational control of industrial schools (House of Commons 1894:4874). In the backdrop of this address, there had been intense rivalries among Christian denominations for the funding of the industrial school. Martin argued that the Conservatives' policy of rapid assimilation failed since it never 'turned out a very large number of good citizens' (quoted in Enns 2009: 102). Moreover, he continued, 'almost everyone discharged from the industrial school died very shortly afterwards. What is the object of educating these children, if it costs their lives to educate them?' (House of Commons 1894: 4874).

In 1909, Peter Bryce, general medical superintendent for the Department of Indian Affairs, reported to the Health Department that between 1894 and 1908, the mortality rates at some residential schools in Western Canada ranged from 30 to 60 per cent within five years after entry. The Truth and Reconciliation Commission<sup>7</sup> later revealed that at least 3,000 students had died in residential schools, mostly from diseases (reported on CBC News, on February 2013). The majority of students at the industrial schools were children, although the intended age group for the schools was open to all ages, including adults (Coté 2010).

#### ***6.2.3.2 Policy of Rapid Assimilation***

The Conservative government, led by Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, promoted industrial schools with the policy of rapid assimilation. The government's general intention was to integrate the Indigenous population into European Canadian society. The industrial schools became the government's main vehicle to implement the policy of rapid assimilation. About the same period of time, the American industrial schools, in parallel, were the main feature of an American policy known as 'aggressive civilization,' which

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<sup>7</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. A commission tasked with discovering and revealing past wrongdoing by a government (or, depending on the circumstances, non-state actors also), for the purpose of resolving conflicts left over from the past.

was to encourage Indigenous people to take up American citizenship and renounce tribal affiliations (Davin 1879:1).

Though, it is not clear that the Christian denominations had resolutely agreed with the government's political intention for the policy of rapid assimilation at the beginning of these schools. Christian denominations had long been involved in missionary work among Indigenous people in North America (Miller 1996: 39-61). Churches might have agreed to the idea of residential schools only in terms that by removing Indigenous children from the influence of their parents and communities and placing them under the care of Christian educators, they thought to expedite their missionary propagation of the Christian messages. (Miller 1996:61-121; Milloy 1999:1-23).

The policy of rapid assimilation was specifically aimed at Indigenous young children, and it provided the infrastructure to remove children from their parents. This was discussed in the House of Commons:

If children were left with their family, they still may know how to read and write, but they still remain savages, whereas by separating them in the way proposed, they acquire the habits and tastes –it is to be hoped only the good tastes—of civilized people (1883: 1376).

Nevertheless, a similar sentiment that echoed in the period of residential schools is still being shared by some recent missionaries that the current native home environment may be explicated for hindering the Christian discipleship of youths.

### ***6.2.3.3 Boarding Schools and Day Schools***

The colonial government stopped building industrial agriculture schools after the Liberals gained power in 1896. Instead, the Liberal government focused on constructing boarding and day schools. The Liberal government deferred to a policy of segregation that, instead of industrial agriculture, students should be taught the skills needed for subsistence farming and domestic life inside a reserve (Enns 2009: 101). The colonial government

assessed that the possibility of rapid assimilation diminished and employed the policy of reserve-base segregation supplanting the earlier policy of assimilation.

The infrastructure and bureaucratic momentum created in the expansion of the industrial school was sustained through residential schooling during much of the twentieth century (Enns 2009: 103). In general, the industrial schools were designed to provide training for working-class jobs, whereas the residential schools were to focus more on literacy and numeracy. Also, the industrial schools tended to be located farther away from the children's communities than the residential schools (Smith 2001: 256-59). Nonetheless, in time, the purpose of these two distinct schools blurred. After the reorganization of Indigenous education in the 1920s, both schools collectively became known as 'residential schools.' Undeterred by the difference in direction and policy between the Conservatives and the Liberals, the Indigenous culture and traditions remained hidden within the topic of education.

### **6.3 Missionary Activities in the Nuuchah-nulth Region**

Father Brabant arrived in Vancouver Island in 1869. It was at the early stage of colonization of Western Canada, and British Columbia was still isolated from the rest of colonial activities from Eastern Canada. With the introduction of several diseases from Europe, the Indigenous population in British Columbia had been reduced significantly. Some gave a rough estimate of eighty thousand in 1835 decreased to twenty-eight thousand in 1855.<sup>8</sup>

Long before the arrival of Father Brabant in the Nuuchah-nulth region, the six years of the Spanish occupation of Yuquot, from 1789 to 1795, Spanish Franciscan priests had established an outpost in the Nootka Inlet. But they had made no serious effort to Christianize the Indigenous people in the region (Weber 2005:194).

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<sup>8</sup> But this estimate is not verifiable with the official government statistics.



After the Spanish left Yuquot, a few Protestant missionaries had operated in the Northwest regions, between 1829 and 1838, with little success. Other Roman Catholic mission activities were initiated by a number of different orders, but their influences could never reach the Nuu-chah-nulth territory. The early efforts by Roman Catholic missionaries were seen to be superficial and had a minimal lasting impact (McDowell 2012:15). It was not until the late 1850s when the missionaries established a permanent settlement that any significant missional impact was made. Furthermore, the missionary activities were used to relieve the fear of the unknown for new Euro-American settlers and to foster immigration to the Pacific Northwest region (McDowell 2012:15).

During the 1860s, the Oblate missions were actively engaged in Vancouver Island. They understood their mission was to be ‘converting and civilizing the Indians’ (McDowell 2012:17). Their system required the Indigenous peoples to build European style housing, centred around a church, to preserve their traditions, such as dancing, feasts, and religious rituals. The Oblate priests designated leadership to the chiefs that were picked by them and the spies to watch them in order for them to obey the rules (Forbes 1961:139).

After the Oblate mission left Vancouver Island in 1858, a Belgian secular priest, Charles John Seghers, visited the Northwest coast of Vancouver Island briefly, following a shipwreck. This experience convinced the young priest that Hesquiaht was to be his first mission site of the region.

Finally, in 1874, Bishop Seghers and Father Brabant, two Belgians, started the first permanent mission post in the Nuu-chah-nulth region. The mission up to this point was assessed in these words:

Harbouring notions of racial supremacy and cultural superiority, the Oblates practised a form of ‘reduction’ that aimed to demean and/or dismiss the native culture, systematically destroy it, and then assimilate the conquered society through radical forms of re-education. To indoctrinate natives, these missionaries initially relied on an approach called religious-syncretism – the spontaneous melding of ideas and practices related to two or more world views. (McDowell 2012:18-19).

The Catholic missions seemed to focus on church liturgies and catechisms and, thus, were viewed as superficial. Their main focus of the mission was to indigenize the contents of Roman Catholic religion in an effort to convert the Indigenous people. The Indigenous people received little explanation before getting baptized. As a result, few were truly converted and most of them returned to their traditional spirituality. During the same period, some syncretistic cults were created which fused aboriginal ideas and Catholicism. The Indian Shaker Church was founded in 1881 by the Squaxin spiritual elder, John Slocum and his wife Mary Slocum in Washington. The Indian Shaker Church is a unique blend of Indigenous, Catholic, and Protestant beliefs and practices.<sup>9</sup>

Cultural modifications of an individual, group, or people by adapting to or borrowing traits from another culture, as Merriam Webster defines, is called acculturation. Acculturation usually occurs naturally when two or more cultures are interacting together. But during this time of Catholic mission, the idea of acculturation was widely circulated and actively promoted among Catholic missionaries. This resulted in the publication of the Nootkan-English transliteration of '*Catechism and Prayer Booklet*' by Father Brabant.<sup>10</sup>

Father Brabant worked for the following next three decades in the Nuu-chah-nulth territory as he considered this remote, unfamiliar region as his special field of labour. However, prior to his arrival, the Nuu-chah-nulth people in this territory had been living with their traditional spirituality, passed down from their ancestors. The historian, Robin Fisher, captured this moment of transition:

As long as their traditional way of life remained intact, Indians had no reason to adopt a new value system such as Christianity. It was only after the disruptive impact of settlement seemed to render old truths ineffectual that the Indians needed to turn to new ones. Acceptance of missionary teaching by Indians was a sign that their culture was

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<sup>9</sup> Personal visit to the Indian Shakers Church in Hood Canal, Washington in 2002.

<sup>10</sup> Around the same time, *Bibliography of the Wakashan Languages* by James Constantine Pilling was published 1894. *The Book of Common Prayer* (1900), of the Church of England, was transliterated in Wakashan language (Kwakiutl version), along with St. Matthew's Gospel (1882), St. John's Gospel (1888-1889). Source: <http://justus.anglican.org/resources/bcp/Muss-Arnolt/part7c.htm>.

undergoing major change and that they needed new knowledge to cope with their new situation (Fisher 1992:124).

Fisher's assessment implies that the desire for the new civilization grew after contact and the adaptation of Christian faith by the Nuu-chah-nulth was almost voluntary.

#### 6.4 Nuu-chah-nulth Residential Schools

The residential schools established by the Canadian government for the Nuu-chah-nulth people operated for over a hundred years and ended in 1984. During this period, according to the NTC data, approximately 5,000 Nuu-chah-nulth children attended eight residential and day schools. Nuu-chah-nulth children attended these schools with other children from neighbouring First Nations tribes.

| Location     | Residence           | Affiliation           | Period of Operation |
|--------------|---------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Ahousaht     | Ahousaht Day School | United (Presbyterian) | 1904-1975           |
| Alert Bay    | St. Michael         | Anglican              | 1929-1941           |
| Chilliwack   | Coqualeetza         | Roman Catholic        | 1890-1941           |
| Kamloops     | Kamloops            | Roman Catholic        | 1890-1978           |
| Mission      | St. Mary's          | Roman Catholic        | 1861-1984           |
| Port Alberni | Alberni (AIRS)      | United                | 1920-1973           |
| Tofino       | (Old) Christie      | Roman Catholic        | 1900-1973           |
|              | New Christie        |                       | 1974-1983           |

**Table 6.1: List of Nuu-chah-nulth Residential Schools (Source: NTC)**

Many residential school attendees are still living today. The attendees at Old Christie (1900-1973) are in their nineties. The Nuu-chah-nulth peoples attended different

residential schools (Table 6.1) between 1861 and 1984. During my time as a field missionary with the Nuuchah-nulth, from 1996 to 2014, I collected stories about residential schools and fortuitously visited some residential school sites. For this study, I conducted several formal field interviews sporadically from the Spring of 2011 to the Spring of 2012. I interviewed fifty-five male and female Nuuchah-nulth at the reserves (bands): Ahousaht, Kyuquot, Hesquiaht, and Port Alberni (Tseshaht). This distribution covers all major geographical areas including Alberni Inlet, Clayoquot Sound, Nootka Sound, and Kyuquot.

#### **6.4.1 Interviews**

The years in which the interviewees attended residential schools were from 1923 to 1977. Out of 55 interviewees, twenty went to Old Christie, and 18, Alberni Indian Residential School (AIRS), 3, (New) Christie, 2, Ahousaht Day School, and 12, mixed. There were 23 women and 32 men.

The questions uniformly used for the interviews were made in politically neutral terms without supporting any side of current political debates about residential schools. I am aware the fact that the initial study on Indian residential schools was led by Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) which was mandated to bring justice and healing to the victims of residential school survivors. Thus, the truth-telling in this series of studies, which includes an independent study done NTC from 1992 to 1994, was influenced by the concepts of 'survivor,' 'cultural genocide,' 'trauma,' and 'healing,' and may offer an example of 'victim centrism' (Niezen 2016:1).

Furthermore, non-religious questions were used. Any talk on religion tends to bring back a series of negative emotions about the residential school from the previously formed consensus, which also could render biased outcomes. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that the negative feelings and thoughts about the experience of the Indian

residential school collectively formed in the Indigenous group were predominant. But this collective attitude was not always politically generated.

The interview questions were:

1. Which residential school did you attend? What years?
2. What are the things you remember about residential school when you first went there?
3. What were you taught there?
4. What your memories about the teachers or staff at the residential school?
5. What was your daily schedule at residential school?
6. What were the extra-curricular activities at school?
7. Tell me about your physical treatment while at school.
8. Tell me about your emotional treatment while at school.
9. Tell me how your life has been since you were in school and how your school experience relates to your life.

The interview questions were specific. Since the Nuuchahnulth people are good storytellers, the study collected more personal narratives about their overall residential school experiences than corresponding answers to the interview questions.

#### ***6.4.1.1 Issues from the Interviews***

Initial findings from my interviews lack any explicit discussion about the contents of Christian faiths or doctrinal understanding. The overall aim of the chapter was to find out how the residential schools shaped the understanding of Christianity but no raw data for what they learned about Christianity surfaced. However, enough about their implied understandings of Christian faith came forth in their discussion. Furthermore, the interview data moved this study towards focusing on the affective impacts of residential school on the understanding of the Nuuchahnulth Christian faith.

Three themes stood out in all the time periods surveyed: 1) Almost all interviews include references to the great loneliness children felt on separation from their families (93 per cent), and often their sense of abandonment by their parents; 2) Almost all interviews reflect on the loss or oppression of Indigenous culture and language (91 per cent); and 3) Almost all refer to witnessing (92 per cent) or experiencing (90 per cent) various types of physical punishment and abuse in residential school. Only one per cent made reference to better conditions at school than at home.

#### **6.4.2 Initial Encounters at Residential Schools**

As any young person who moves to a new place would, the students who went to residential school felt uncomfortable at first. Some of them were from their home communities and brought to life in the school dormitories. The schools had a different set of rules and regulations, foreign and more restrictive to their previous way of life at home. The transition to the new life was abrupt, and, thus, unsettling for some young Nuu-chah-nulths who had to swiftly adapt. In addition to slow adaptation, they faced Christianity immediately in everyday life. This sudden transition made it more difficult for the students emotionally to endure the subsequent life at the schools.

Some students responded emotionally to this discomfort. There was much crying because of insecurity, loneliness, and fear. Some of the interviewees remembered their memory of the first few days of the residential schools was the scenes of younger students crying everywhere. There were chain reactions to cry after one student started crying. Older girls would comfort the younger ones. Many had wished that they could go back to their homes.

Their memories of the initial encounter at the residential schools were coloured by the subsequent experiences of attending the schools. The Nuu-chah-nulths who went through the residential school often share, in private settings, positive, happy, and funny stories

from there.<sup>11</sup> However, the positive side of their memories from residential schools often not expressed and are hidden under the shadow of the collective opinion formed in their society.

#### ***6.4.2.1 Separation and Loneliness***

The initial trauma found in the interview points to the issue of separation from family, relatives, and friends. Ninety-three per cent (93 per cent) of the interviewees described their experience of leaving home and how hard it was being separated from family and friends. A Hesquiaht who attended Old Christie in 1948 was locked in a cabin with his close cousin, and they were separated. He recalled that he learned to ‘cry without a sound.’<sup>12</sup> He often prayed for a miracle to see his parents. The schools did not allow outside visitors to visit the students. But under special circumstances, very brief visits were allowed. Siblings at the same school were not allowed to visit each other, or to have a conversation. The schools kept them apart. The students were separated in different age groups and put them in different sections of the school.

The Nuu-chah-nulth built the networks of families and relatives, spread out in many villages and sub-divisions, through generations of socializing and intermarriages, which provided security for them. Children growing up in these environments were always cared for and protected by all sides of the family. No formal babysitting was required in their communities. What Nuu-chah-nulth students at residential school missed and referred to as ‘home’ were not the immediate members of the family and closest cousins but the entire network of a nurturing environment.

Some felt abandoned from family or primary care-giver while at residential schools. An Ehattesaht man, who began attending Old Christie in 1956 said that he felt lonely and

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<sup>11</sup> There were, in the interviews, the recollections by the attendees that were both sad and happy about the residential schools.

<sup>12</sup> A Hesquiaht (male) who went to Old Christie around 1948 (RS06).

scared at school because of the absence of his parents.<sup>13</sup> A Kyuquot interviewee who experienced the trauma of separation when he first went to Old Christie in 1963 called to mind that he cried ‘watching his parents going away in the boat.’<sup>14</sup> A Ditidaht who went to AIRS in 1940 spoke about being away from home where he learned loneliness, emptiness, like no one cared, all of which amounted to the feeling of abandonment.<sup>15</sup> A Nuu-chah-nulth who attended St. Michael and AIRS shared the same experience. She felt insecure ‘being on a boat owned by a Church denomination’ as no one told her where she was taken.<sup>16</sup> Some of them remember that they were transported to residential schools by the boats owned by a church or priests. An Ahousaht who went to AIRS in 1923 recalled her younger sister was taken by a police officer to a school, ‘Sarah went in by police.’<sup>17</sup> For every child leaving his or her loved ones for an extended period of time was a traumatic experience.

After the Federal Indian Education Policy became effective in the Western regions, Nuu-chah-nulth children, as young as 6 to 15 years of age, were compulsorily taken away from home. Some took it as being abandoned by their parents. A Hesquiaht attendee held a bitterness for years towards his parents, having thought that his parents were abandoning him. The degree of sadness and trauma for the Indigenous children was intensified by the fact that these schools to them were a strange place, like, ‘another world.’<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> An Ehatisaht male (RS37).

<sup>14</sup> A Kyuquot male (RS39).

<sup>15</sup> A Ditidaht male (RS11).

<sup>16</sup> A female who went to St. Michael’s and AIRS (RS22).

<sup>17</sup> An Ahousaht female who went to AIRS in 1923 (RS15).

<sup>18</sup> A Ditidaht female (RS22).



#### 6.4.2.2 Physical Environment

The residential schools were usually built on top of the village or at the end of an open field away from the village. As they are still standing today in the villages like Ahousaht and Kyuquot, the size of school buildings was intimidating being bigger than other buildings in the village. The size and distance seemed to display their importance and authority. The sanitary conditions at residential schools were poor and students suffered from malnourishment, inadequate clothing, insufficient medical care, and death from disease was reported.

| No. | Issues                             | Per cent of Response |
|-----|------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1   | Separation from Family and Friends | 91                   |
| 2   | Loss of Culture and Language       | 90                   |
| 3   | Acquisition of Culture and Values  | 75                   |
| 4   | Witness to Abuse                   | 88                   |
| 5   | Experience of Abuse                | 90                   |

**Table 6.2: Main Issues emerging in the Study**

When the children arrived in residential schools, the setting was much different from their homes. The differences in the settings were not easily understood at first but they soon realized their confinement to the school: the strict boundaries, restricted to the new food, the new clothing, and sleeping rules. One interviewee recalled:

But everything was strange, it was all these other children around, and lots of them crying, in a strange place, big room, and I couldn't sleep. I remember I couldn't sleep for days, I didn't sleep.<sup>19</sup>

The general physical conditions at the residential schools for Nuuchah-nulth children were alien and mystifying beyond the scope of their understanding. The school rules

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<sup>19</sup> An Ahousaht male who went to AIRS in 1956 (RS03).

experienced by the Indigenous students, however, were not different from any other school in that era, but for the Indigenous students, the experience was new. They described the experience of physical confinement at school as being ‘locked on an island.’<sup>20</sup> Children were used to their home in shared land where they were exposed to the sea and the hills. The freedom to go places at their will was also taken away.

An AIRS attendee in the 1950s and the 1960s recalled that severe punishments were meted out for violating the rules governing a school even when they went within five feet of the school fence. Even when the schools were situated on their own reserved land<sup>21</sup> talking to anyone over the fence violated the rule. Not permitted to talk to the siblings while attending the same schools frustrated many. The schools were segregated by gender, and they seldom saw each other during the courses of their schedule. They were confined to the designated areas. A boy, seeing his sister on one side and wanting to wander over to her, kept getting pushed back. He said that this was ‘awfully confusing’ as a child.<sup>22</sup>

Upon their arrival, the school changed their clothing to school uniforms. This change was also difficult for them to adapt and interpreted as a denial of their individual identity and seen as forcible assimilation. Residential school attendees often recalled these events as the first loss of self-esteem.

The food at residential schools was very different from their homes. The School District no. 70 describes that the Nuuchah-nulth traditional home diets were rich in fish, waterfowl, venison and other wild meats, i.e., hart. Now they were given cereals, vegetables, and pork, or hamburgers and they ate the same food every day. The food at the school was not satisfying.

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<sup>20</sup> An Ahousaht female (RS15).

<sup>21</sup> Under the Liberal government, certain day school and residential schools were situated in their home villages or nearby.

<sup>22</sup> A Paachiinah-aht male who started in 1951 at AIRS (RS02).

Their food at AIRS in the 1940s was, one boiled egg, a slice of bread, an apple or orange during weekdays, a slice of bologna, a slice of bread, an apple or an orange for Sundays which was considered the best meal of the week. The senior students got double the amount: two slices of bologna, two boiled eggs, and four slices of bread. They also had the cream of wheat as breakfast.

There was not enough food at the schools. Those who attended AIRS from 1934 recalled that there was a shortage of food, and the boys had to steal in order to feed themselves. The food at the school was a big commodity. Basically, everyone was starved. Because of malnutrition, they started to ‘get scurvy.’<sup>23</sup> After a student riot at AIRS, the Board of Health stepped in and improvements for the food were made.

The mealtime was unpleasant because of fear and intimidation. It was also not dignifying because of ‘the subconscious reminder that they had to utter these prayers before every meal in order to eat.’<sup>24</sup> It contrasted with a festive and pleasant mealtime at home. The dining hall was divided, the boys on one side and the girls the other and they ‘never ate together like a family.’<sup>25</sup>

Sleeping arrangements were made in a large hall with a high ceiling where it echoed any sound that they made. They were sleeping in the multiple rows of military-style cots. The windows were barred to prevent any incident. The halls were locked during the night and monitored in the middle of the night. The younger children often wet the bed because they could not get to the toilet when the doors were locked. The sleeping halls were supervised by school staff, accessed also by principals, and resident ministers. Having to sleep near the strange adults other than their own family members, children at night often felt abandoned.

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<sup>23</sup> A Tseshaht female who went to AIRS in 1940 (RS08).

<sup>24</sup> A Kyuquot male who attended Christie (RS14).

<sup>25</sup> A Kyuquot male (RS14).

#### ***6.4.2.3 Ban on Nuu-chah-nulth Language***

The ban on the use of the Nuu-chah-nulth language at the residential schools brought a lot of confusion to the students. It has created an inferior view of their own culture. Some resisted the ban because they felt that their peoplehood was violated. Others protested against the suppression of the Nuu-chah-nulth language by talking Nuu-chah-nulth whenever they were not monitored. But the school officials decided that the new civilization and education could only be implemented when they learned in the European language and culture. The ban initially created a source of confusion about their purpose of being at school. It usually took about six months to a year before they reached a minimal level of communication at school.

The ban on their traditional language and culture at schools had a profound impact on the way that Christianity was perceived by the Nuu-chah-nulth. Christianity could not be understood in their own culture created the cultural incommunicability and the perpetual distance that blocked a successful transmission of the core messages of Christianity to the people.

A student was informed, on the boat ride to her school, that she ‘wasn’t allowed to speak Indian there.’<sup>26</sup> The use of the traditional language was discouraged in a number of different ways: the students were ignored, met with silence, or received disapproving looks when they spoke in their traditional language. They were often reprimanded for using their language. When they were caught speaking their language in the sleeping halls, they had to kneel down beside their beds with their faces down for two or three minutes. Conversely, the students who advanced in English were rewarded or praised.

In most cases, the official rules for banning any use of Indigenous language were explicitly stated. Also, a range of penalties, including corporal punishment, was given to

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<sup>26</sup> A Kyuquot male who went to Old Christie in 1948 for 7 years (RS24).

those who broke the rules. The early residential schools were attended by those who could speak only Nuu-chah-nulth. The Christian schools in most of the British colonies were run by Christian churches. The missionaries who ran the early residential schools were more zealous than others who came later. They were the ones who strictly enforced the ban on the Indigenous language at the earlier stage of residential schools. At Christie, a vigorous Roman Catholic nun, who was a teacher, inserted a piece of soap in the mouths of ones who violated the rules, as a punishment, symbolically washing the Indigenous language out of their mouths.<sup>27</sup> Many of the interviewees feel that they now speak 'broken English' or 'broken Indian.'<sup>28</sup>

Furthermore, the students were not permitted to 'think cultural' which meant that they were not allowed to think and discuss their own culture.<sup>29</sup> Compounded with difficult memories about the ban on the use of their own language before they learned the English language at school was the persistent effort to civilize Indigenous students at residential schools. The result was the loss of their own language and culture that became the source of their anger and dismay.

However, an important motivation for the willing parents and grandparents who encouraged the children to go to school was for them to learn 'the white-man's language.' The best preparation to meet 'white people' and 'the society of white people' was to learn their language.<sup>30</sup> Some families encouraged their children to go to school in order to help other Indigenous people someday. As discussed, the Indigenous leaders understood that in signing the treaty, certain benefits including the education of their younger generation would be warranted, since they agreed that going forward in civilization was a positive movement for their peoples. Nearly every Indigenous people across North America had

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<sup>27</sup> This was from my personal conversation with Chris Jules at Kyuquot.

<sup>28</sup> An Ahousaht male who attended Christie in 1926 (RS38).

<sup>29</sup> A male interviewee who went to AIRS in 1947 (RS21).

<sup>30</sup> A Ditidaht male who went to AIRS in 1940 (RS11).

to experience an Aboriginal boarding school. The cultural loss of some tribes can be worse than the other tribes as Tinker describe the loss of a ‘cultural extinction’ (Tinker 1993).

#### **6.4.3 Experiences at Residential Schools**

Many said that the school environment was generally abusive. Many grievances were expressed during the interviews especially when discussing the topic of abuse. Residential schools are often synonymous with abuse to many Nuu-chah-nulth attendees. My recent encounter was with a Nuu-chah-nulth school teacher who was asked by the school to teach her students about Christianity. She wondered about what to teach, and her relatives and friends told her that she should teach them about the ‘cruelty of residential school.’<sup>31</sup>

There were systematic and random abuses at residential schools. The systematic abuses included strict rules and unfamiliar policies the students felt were unjust. At the very start of the school, long hair was cut short and maintained always curled, personal clothes stripped were away, and the uniforms provided. No considerations for their home culture and lifestyle were given when the school rules and policies were applied. The ban on their own Indigenous language damaged their dignity. However, in contrast, most of the physical and sexual abuses experienced were random and personal.

Experiencing or witnessing abuses at the school raised questions about Christianity. Abuse at a residential school is a recurrent topic which surfaces at the Nuu-chah-nulth spiritual healing circles or at prayer meetings. From the interviews, 90 per cent of AIRS attendees, and 95 per cent of Christie attendees witnessed abuse, and that 88 per cent of AIRS attendees and 95 per cent of Christie were victimized during their school years. The residential school abuse may be categorized as: physical, sexual, emotional, and spiritual.

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<sup>31</sup> An Indigenous school teacher who teaches at *Maqqtisiis* School in Ahousaht.

Proper discipline and abuse may be differentiated, but the students perceived extreme discipline and harsh and stringent rules also as abuse. There was much reluctance about sharing the nature and details of some abuse as they still remembered the time, the date occurred, and the names of the abusers who were responsible.<sup>32</sup>

Emotional and spiritual abuses were experienced when fundamental human rights were overlooked to demote the value of a person. Thus, these experiences strongly registered and remained in the memory of the victim and kept hurting for long after the actual incidents.

#### **6.4.3.1 Physical Treatment**

Harsher punishment was carried out for boys. Corporal punishment with a strap as a punishment for stealing was given for using their native language. Female students were hit with rulers and sticks. Sometimes, no justifications were given before physical punishments. The beatings were unjustifiable at times.

| School Entry Years | 1923-40 | 1941-56 | 1956-1977 |
|--------------------|---------|---------|-----------|
| Witness to Abuse   | 84      | 100     | 87        |
| - Physical         | 81      | 96      | 74        |
| - Sexual           | 4       | 36      | 18        |
| - Emotional        | 62      | 92      | 80        |
| Abuse Victim       | 72      | 99      | 93        |
| - Physical         | 71      | 94      | 79        |
| - Sexual           | 2       | 55      | 31        |
| - Emotional        | 65      | 94      | 94        |
| - Spiritual        | 40      | 81      | 74        |

**Table 6.3: Abuses (Percentage) by School Year**

<sup>32</sup> In some cases, specific incidents at school are corroborated by other interviews. Guilty pleas were recently entered in courts to criminal charges filed.

In Table 6.3, abuse by school years, I divided the entire group into three groups by their school periods:

- Early period (1923-40)
- Middle period (1941-56)
- Late period (1957-77)

Any significance to these divisions may be simply different age groups attending residential schools at different periods of time that can show variations. A general uniform pattern of responses was found in the interview data, with period one showing lower percentages, and period two the highest on most issues. There may be three possible explanations for the pattern:

1. The older people are more adhered to Nuu-chah-nulth teaching not to talk about bad experiences, rooted in the belief that talking about evil invites it into your life;
2. Recollections of specific school experiences are less clear or tempered by subsequent life experiences among the oldest respondents; or
3. The initial passion and missionary zeal of the staff depleted over time and their attitude became complacent and demoralized. As a result, the schools became undesirable places.

#### ***6.4.3.2 Sexual Abuse at the Residential Schools***

The middle period (1941-56) shows the most disclosures of abuse in general and specifically sexual abuse (55 per cent). Sexual abuse left the victims with a feeling of shame and humiliation for life. The data also show that more male students responded to being victimized by sexual abuse than female students.



| Sex                     | Male (33)   | Female (22) |
|-------------------------|-------------|-------------|
| Witness to sexual abuse | 21 per cent | 18 per cent |
| Sexual abuse victim     | 38 per cent | 17 per cent |

**Table 6.4: Sexual Abuse by Sex**

The testimonies of sexual abuses at residential schools are descriptive. Through the growing apprehension about sexual abuse at school, more fear and suspicion grew among the students. There is no quantitative evidence to support the estimate of certain cases of individual experience.

#### ***6.4.3.3 Expectation of Christian Moral Standards***

It was a common perception, by the general society and among Indigenous peoples that Christians were supposed to hold higher moral standards. But some interviewees expressed their disappointment because their expectations had failed them. From the beginning of their operation, residential schools were represented as an extension and exemplar of a sacred narrative of the church's missionary work among Indigenous peoples (Woods 2013:178). Some students experienced ridiculed by others because of sexual rumours that originated from their school. They did not like attending a 'mission school' and that they had to maintain and display the expected higher standard of morality.

An attempt can be made to perceive moral discourses of Indigenous cultures within the parameters of a conventional, Western, religious understanding while embracing an authentic mode of traditional knowledge construction within indigenous communities. Blended moral construction between Christianity and indigenous religious understanding may not be useful because Indigenous morality may not be necessarily based on religion but on the dynamics of collective communal well-being, without dissolving the individual's character. If this notion was accepted, colonial Christianity on the moral formation of the students at residential schools had a nominal effect. Nevertheless, it is

apparent that the moral praxis of the contemporary Nuu-chah-nulth society does not reflect the standard of Western morality. As much as the Nuu-chah-nulths try to adhere to the norm of wider contemporary Canadian society the real source of their morality is still based on their communal dynamics.

It was noted that the interviewees used the word ‘the church’ and ‘the residential school’ synonymously. ‘Priests’ and ‘police’ were the same authorities in the colonial system. There was hardly any distinction made between the colonial authority and the church. Thus, what the residential schools had done was considered the same as ‘what the church had done’ to the people. The sexual violence victimized the Indigenous children and left them with ‘deep emotional scars,’ more than the fact that they had become alcoholics and addicts as consequences of the abuse. They also felt that the religion was ‘hammered down their throats’<sup>33</sup> alongside their residential school ordeals which prompted them to ask ‘how do I believe in a religion that causes so much pain to our people? How am I supposed to believe these people that are preaching to our people?’<sup>34</sup>

#### ***6.4.3.4 Sexual Violence in the Colonial Situation***

Sexual abuse at residential schools left lasting hurt on the victims. They often had vengeful thoughts that were ‘eating away all the time’<sup>35</sup> at them. Andrea Smith, who is an American academic and activist against sexual violence against women, specifically Indigenous women,<sup>36</sup> argued that sexual violence did not simply occur with the process of colonialism, but that colonialism was itself structured by the logic of sexual violence.

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<sup>33</sup> A Nuu-chah-nulth who went to AIRS (RS21).

<sup>34</sup> A Kyuquot male who went to Christie (RS14).

<sup>35</sup> A Ditidaht female who went to AIRS (RS10).

<sup>36</sup> Andrea Smith claimed to be of the Cherokee race, but the community has not yet accepted the claim yet.

Within the context of the colonization of Indigenous nations, sexual violence affected them in a different way. When Indigenous women suffered abuse, this abuse was not just an attack on her identity as a woman but on their identity as an Indigenous person. This explained why every sexual abuse survivors said that they wished they were ‘no longer Indian’ (Smith 2003:71). Indigenous people were ‘a permanent present-absence in the colonial imagination’ that everything happened and done to them reinforced the ideas that the Indigenous identity was vanishing, and the conquest of their lands was justified (Smith 2003:72). The Nuu-chah-nulth women who were victimized by the sexual abuse at residential school struggled with the painful memories and tried to cope with them. Perhaps this provided a reason why the residential school sexual victims suffered longer and experienced intense pain as its consequences.

#### ***6.4.3.5 Spiritual Condition at the Residential Schools***

As religious abuse was defined as abuse administered under the guise of religion, including harassment or humiliation, which resulted in psychological trauma, the nature of the spiritual abuse at residential schools was not in the misuse of religion or a clerical position towards selfish ends. The schools granted themselves comprehensive power and authority that created no dynamics for open accountability to question or challenge the system. The children at the school were not allowed to express their own ideas and true feelings, especially anything against the school staff or the religion. Some of the students felt that they were forced to ‘say what they had to say’ and could not say anything against them. An attendee at Old Christie said, ‘they would say shut up when we speak as we were spoken to.’ The students were strapped for expressing true feelings. He continued, ‘we had to tell them what they said. We couldn’t be truthful.’<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> A Ditidaht male who went to AIRS in 1940 (RS11).

Fear, guilt, and threats were routinely used to produce absolute obedience and forced conformity at the schools. Living under a perpetual state of fear and overt punishments made the children feel worthless. Punishments were often carried out even before the situations were properly assessed at schools. The children who lived under the system of obvious injustice for a long time were spiritually affected. As a result of prolonged spiritual abuse, the students were demoralized. Confusion about their identity and fundamental personhood resulted from being humiliated by witnessing or experiencing abuse. Fear, as spiritual abuse, was suffered by children in the school environment where children were confined, constantly afraid and humiliated. Injustice was felt when they were wrongly punished.

#### ***6.4.3.6 Positive Experience at the Residential Schools***

However, not all that they experienced was negative since the residential school experience varied from person to person as the students had different temperaments and personalities. There were students who were encouraged to attend the schools by their parents and grandparents. Some parents thought that their children must attend school. They knew that it was ‘going to be okay’ from the beginning. It was ‘kind of exciting’ for them.<sup>38</sup> Despite the stiff rules for visitors some students were visited by their parents, as often as twice a week, or they were allowed to visit home. The students had a summer break for two months during which they enjoyed fishing with their father and had time to spend time with the family and also to get to know their younger siblings at home. Some experienced normal childhood friendships at school. To some students, the schools were family to them. As groups of children from the same villages attended the school in the vicinity, they also had many village friends at the school and were not lonely. Despite the initial difficulties as they had to switch their language from Nuu-chah-nulth to English,

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<sup>38</sup> A Kyuquot male who went to Old Christie in 1963 (RS39).

learning and mastering the English language made them feel better. It had taken three to six months to pick up a little bit of English to be able to communicate at school. They were compelled to learn the language ‘to get into this other society.’<sup>39</sup> European civilization was something desired by many. They wanted to advance in a new society. The students also knew that they could avoid harsh punishment if they just went with the flow. Some thought that teachers did what they had to do as teachers, including occasional punishments. The overall experience at the school taught the ability to adopt proper discipline which helped them through. Before punishment was given the teachers gave them a warning, and certain punishments gave them a positive discipline. Most of the time the punishment was properly meted out, as some bad behaviours deserved it.

The Oblates Missions<sup>40</sup> who were responsible for running the last ten residential schools in British Columbia, denied any charges against them, whether abuses or wrongdoings at the schools. They rather praised church workers as ‘dedicated selfless people who gave their lives to educate the children.’ They accounted for all the complaints from residential schools as ‘culture shock’ (Lascelles 1990).

## **6.5 Residential Schools in Other Colonies**

It was the general argument by indigenous peoples that the historic purpose of residential schools was to assimilate indigenous peoples into the dominant society and to eliminate local cultures. These schools were often managed in cooperation with Christian missions with the stated purpose of Christianizing indigenous peoples, particularly in South America, North America, Africa, and the Pacific. Indigenous groups in the United States of America and Canada went through the assimilation policy that allowed their children

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<sup>39</sup> A Toquaht male who went to Old Christie in 1929 (RS27).

<sup>40</sup> Roman Catholic Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in Canada. They published *Roman Catholic Indian Residential School in British Columbia* (1990) to commemorate the 150th anniversary of the Roman Catholic Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate, in Canada.

to be forcibly removed from their homes, as the native homes were viewed as the main source of uncivilized living conditions. The Indigenous cultures were blamed and considered a hindrance to becoming civilized persons (Adams 1995). In Western Australia and other Pacific regions, some schools aimed at the children of mixed ancestry as a way to develop an elite class within indigenous communities that could manage their own communities (Fitzgerald 1977). The rationale was that the children with lighter skin tones were thought to be more easily assimilated into white society than the full-blooded Indigenous children (Smith 2009:15).

From the other side, the schools and policy providers rationalized that they provided a means for indigenous peoples to achieve status in the dominant society. Many indigenous leaders initially supported the idea of education but, in general, the expected level of education at residential schools was not adequate for the Indigenous children to achieve their goals.

### **6.5.1 Australian Residential Schools**

In Australia, indigenous children were removed from their homes as a source of cheap labour. The reason given for the removal of children stated that, in order to ‘inculcate European values and work habits in children, who would then be employed in service to the colonial settlers.’<sup>41</sup> By 1911, its protectionist legislation warranted the Chief Protector or Protection Board extensive power to control indigenous peoples. Missionaries who collaborated with the colonial government agreed with the policy of separating children from their homes to make them Christians. Similar to the Nuu-chah-nulth situations, their children were housed in dormitories where they were not allowed to communicate with their families. Some children were placed in non-indigenous homes, or training institutes. The children at the age of four were taken away to be placed in dormitories and, at the

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<sup>41</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, op cit.

age of 14, they were sent to the missions and settlements to work. Until 1950, the Indigenous children were not allowed to attend state schools, as part of state policy.

In the late 1940s, throughout Australia, there were 50 church-run boarding schools. Similar patterns in the USA and Canada emerged in these schools. Their education concentrated on indoctrinating the Christian faith and preparations for manual labour rather than equipping them for higher education. The abuse was prevalent, and schools were poorly maintained (Beresford et al. 2012). Conditions were dehumanizing in these missions and settlements. Many children were dying because of disease and malnutrition. Sexual violence was commonplace. Children were often forced to work in the homes of European settlers.

As a study prepared for the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues reported, the overall effect of boarding school was destructive:

A three-year longitudinal study undertaken in Melbourne, Australia, during the mid 1980s revealed that compared to children who were not removed from their homes, those that were removed were less likely to have undertaken a post-secondary education; twice as likely to report having been arrested by police and having been convicted of an offence; twice as likely to report current use of illicit substances; and much more likely to report intravenous use illicit substances (Smith 2009:16).

Moreover, a national random survey of indigenous peoples by the Australia Bureau of Statistics in 1994 also confirms that the children ‘who were removed from their homes did not report to have higher incomes, be employed, or attain higher levels of education.’<sup>42</sup>

### **6.5.2 Maori Schools in the Colonial Period**

New Zealand became a British Crown colony in 1840, following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi. Education was used as a means to civilize the Maori peoples. Church denominations were subsidized by the colonial state to run missionary schools. Similar

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<sup>42</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, op cit.

to the policies of other British colonies, Maori children were removed from their homes and their culture because they were considered primitive.

But the strength of Maori resistance against settlers allowed village day schools to be established which also provided English-only education. Maori children had the choice to go to a Maori school or a public primary school which ran in parallel. For further education in secondary school, they had to transfer to Maori denominational boarding schools which provided two years of secondary education. These schools were funded by the Department of Education scholarships in case the parents could not afford to pay the fees. Maori denominational board schools were the Maori girls' school of St Stephen's (1846), St Joseph's (1867) and Hukarere (1875). Schools for Maori boys included St Stephen's (1845) and Te Aute (1854) (Simon & Smith 2001). Maori themselves participated in the establishment of these schools: they initiated the formal request, provided their lands, half of the building costs and a quarter of the teachers' salary.

However, the purpose of the Maori denominational board school was to create 'assimilated elites' class, who were instilled with European values and customs, to manage Maori communities deemed 'savage' by Europeans. Maori girls were favoured at these school because they were seen as primary guardians of the next generation children to inculcate European values and customs (Smith 2009:17).

The standard of education, dress code and behaviour at Maori girls' school matched the level of English middle-class Victorian girls' schools. However, Maori girls were given more menial and harder labours, meal preparation, cleaning, laundry and gardening. They were inculcated with European values and education, but their access to the higher strata of the dominant society was denied. Around the beginning of the twentieth century, the government introduced *The Manual and Technical Instruction Acts* which increased the funding in exchange for teaching manuals and technical instructions such as carpentry, metalwork, cooking, sewing, hygiene and drill. The government applied systemic discrimination to block Maori students from becoming too successful and to be



able to enter universities. Despite all, many Maori students managed to advance their education.

Some boarding school survivors reported that they were able to receive a better education than they might otherwise have received. In New Zealand's case, children were given the chance to make the most of their educational opportunities in boarding schools to further pursue higher education or professional occupations. But in general, these boarding schools did not narrow the gap between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples (Smith 2009:30).

## **6.6 Education in Canadian Residential Schools**

Residential Schools were established in the interests of the colonial society. The vision of Indigenous education was developed by church leaders and by the department of education. The curriculum was designed to render academic as well as practical trades training. Indigenous culture was to be replaced by another through the work of the surrogate parent, the teacher. The Indigenous child, in the words of Reverend Wilson of Shingwauk,<sup>43</sup>

Must be taught many things which come to the white child without the schoolmaster's aid. From the days of its birth, the child of civilized parents is constantly in contact with the modes of civilized life, of action, thought, speech and dress; and is surrounded by a thousand beneficent influences. ...He [the Indian child] must be led out from the conditions ...birth, in his early years, into the environment of civilized domestic life; and he must be thus led by his teacher (Milloy 1999b: 33-4).

The vision led to the single conclusion that the children had to be removed from their families.

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<sup>43</sup> Reverend Edward Francis Wilson, an Anglican priest, education advocate for Amerindian children, and principal at Shingwauk Indian Residential School, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, the Anglican Church's flagship residential school.

### **6.6.1 Curriculum at Residential Schools**

The teaching at residential schools was guided by a standard curriculum. In the beginning, it was supplied by the department and was based largely on an Ontario model. Later, principals were directed to follow the relevant provincial model. In 1896, the Programme of Studies for Indian Schools was published by the department. Students applied themselves to geography, reading, recitation, history, vocal music, calisthenics and religious instruction. Students were also to learn spelling, writing, grammar, diction, drawing and arithmetic.

The second major part of the curriculum was practical training. The practical training was to develop all the abilities, remove prejudice against labour and give the courage to compete with the rest of the world. In 1891, the Department of Education listed industrial activity for boys in carpentry, blacksmithing, agriculture, shoemaking, and printing. Female students received instruction in sewing, shirt-making, knitting, cooking, baking and kitchen work, laundering, dairy work, ironing, gardening, and general household duties. Academic learning and practical training were balanced in the schedule by the half-day system. Students would spend one-half day in the classroom and the other half involved in practical activities.

### **6.6.2 Traditional Education of Indigenous Society**

Although they had no Western form of the educational institution prior to the arrival of colonial residential school, the Nuuchah-nulth possessed an educational system as it was, perhaps, true for all cultures. Education had clear purposes and its achievement was essential for any collective group to survive and to prosper (Miller 1996a: 15). Natural communities like the Nuuchah-nulth employed education to explain to the individual members who they were, who were their people, and how they related to other peoples and the physical world around them. Their educational system sought to train their young in the skills they needed to be successful members of their groups. These skills included

an ability to keep their community, to sustain themselves through the provision of food, to answer questions of everyday life and to calm anxieties, and to defend the group against external threats.

In the absence of a European style of education, Indigenous people did share a number of methods for imparting the lessons that their children needed to grow into healthy and successful adults. The common elements in Indigenous education were the shaping of behaviour by positive examples in the home, the provision of subtle guidance towards desired forms of behaviour through the use of games, a heavy reliance on the use of stories for didactic purposes, and, as the child neared early adulthood, the utilization of more formal and ritualized ceremonies to impart rites of passage with due solemnity.

In childhood, proper behaviour was taught largely by indirect and non-coercive means, in contrast to European child-rearing. Discipline was administered by ridicule and warning rather than with punishment and deprivation. The Nuu-chah-nulth traditional education consisted of their storytelling (*himwitsa humwie'a*) tradition, one of the ways in which they understood their culture and history, as discussed in Chapter Three. The Nuu-chah-nulth children received the Nuu-chah-nulth traditional form of *haahuupa* (teaching), passing on valuable knowledge through a narrative structure designed to both entertain and educate younger generations. The learning of vocational skills, like seal hunting, fishing and cedar bark crafting, was accomplished mainly by childhood games and/or by observation and copying adult behaviour.

The Nuu-chah-nulths who went to residential schools found the education at different from their traditional educational processes and had difficulty in adjusting to a new learning environment. They did not think that the residential schools were built to enhance the education of Nuu-chah-nulth children. Some of them felt that it was always implied that the white culture was superior to their own and that the white people had authority over Indigenous people. Harsh punishments, instead of non-coercive means, were received as a part of discipline, which left an indelible imprint on those who attended

residential schools. The male students were asked to perform manual labour and the female students' domestic duties in places of industrial skill training. Many felt that all they learned at residential school was to work.

### 6.6.3 British Policy of the Poor Law

However, the early nineteenth century was not only a period of major colonial expansion for Britain but also a period of major social reform. Some policies towards Indigenous people at this time was a common feature also shared within British society. Many features of the assimilation policy to Indigenous people were based on Britain's internal social policy known as *the Poor Laws* (House of Commons 1834:1).

The committee appointed by House of Commons in 1836, on Indigenous issues, reported policies based on ideals and methods with that which had been introduced in *the Poor Laws*. The reports dealt with policies concerning the correct way to deal with a population that operated outside the accepted economic structure and which was or could become, a source of disorder. These policies included the following (House of Commons 1837):

- the assertion of control, that is to say, the assumption that an orderly, managed world was needed, and that Britain was to provide it – both at home and overseas
- an assumption that the purpose of the policy was to bring 'outsiders,' whether the poor or aboriginals, within the established institutions of Britain society and, particularly, the wage economy (albeit at the level of the lowest-paid independent labourer)
- a commitment to a legal and regulatory process anchored in a separate law for those outside the mainstream of society, pending their full citizenship
- appointment of 'protectors' (who could provide aboriginal peoples with a restricted status under the law and subject them to summary discipline) and of 'overseers' (who could do the same for paupers)
- special recognition for the situation of children, who were considered particularly open to change, education, and salvation
- special recognition for the elderly, for whom change seemed unlikely
- a recognized place for organized Christianity as an essential element in the process of producing citizens

- an obligation to provide orderly reports on the progress of the administration and the welfare of aboriginal peoples and/or paupers.

These principles provided a framework of aboriginal social policy remained unchanged until the second half of the twentieth century.

#### **6.6.4 Child Welfare Policy**

In Britain, *the Poor Laws* was also using a child welfare policy as a means to manage families by separating the children of paupers from their parents. In the mid-nineteenth century, reformatory and industrial school legislation produced explicit outcomes and the legal authority to separate children from their parents and to make new provisions for children's discipline. Later, child welfare policy was extended to caring for orphans, dealing with truancy, protecting the health of the child and of the community and, eventually, the state gave the legislation the power to protect children from parents whom the authorities considered to be abusive or negligent. If the parents were considered unsuited for raising their children, guardianship was transferred to other 'fit' persons. For the child, these measures meant a childhood and adolescence in residential care or an adopted home (Armitage 1995: 4).

The assimilation policy to Indigenous people was in many ways the extension of the two internal British policies and was not specifically designed only for the British colonies. It suggested that the same standards of policies and practices were used and applicable to both Britons and Aboriginals. Residential schools were part of a network of institutions serving the needs of industrial society: lawfulness, labour, and security of a property. Britain's education, in general, had such a mandate. Therefore, (Indian) residential schools had their parallel in the industrial and correctional school of the same era for incorrigible white children. Non-Indigenous Victoria Industrial School was founded in 1887 (Milloy 1999a: 33). Victoria and other similar schools were founded on the judgment that the middle-class family was failing in its perceived responsibility and

it was imperative to intervene in order to break the cycle of crime, poverty, depravity, and disorder. For the safety of society, the white savage child had to escape the influence of the slum. The education policy of Aboriginal children in the British Settlements was very specific from the beginning (House of Commons 1837:3-4). In the Parliamentary reports,

The Select Committee was appointed to consider what measures ought to be adopted with regard to the Native Inhabitants of Countries where British Settlements are made, and to the neighbouring tribes, in order to secure for them the due observance of justice and the protection of their rights: to promote the spread of civilization among them, and to lead them to the peaceable and voluntary reception of the Christian religion (House Commons 1837:1).

The same reports stated on the education of Indigenous children,

The education of the young will be amongst the foremost of the cares of the missionaries: and the Protectors should render every assistance in their power... It should be one branch of the duty of the Protectors to suggest... such short and simple rules as may form a temporary and provisional code for the regulation of Aborigines, until advancing knowledge and civilization shall have superseded the necessity of any special laws (House of Commons 1837:33).

The reports indicated that it was the government plan that the education of Indigenous children was to be carried out by the missionaries since they were in a good position to serve the two goals that were stated: civilization and Christianization.

#### **6.6.5 Religious Education at Residential Schools**

The residential schools that Nuu-chah-nulth children attended, like most other residential schools in Canada, were operated by Church denominations and organizations. One of the goals for the Church to run residential schools was to convert Indigenous children to the Christian faith, as it is also an agenda proposed by the Colonial Government. The overall aim of educating the young Indigenous was to transform them into ‘good citizens’ in the colonial society, civilized and Christian (House of Commons 1894:4874).

The primary focus of the boarding school curriculum was to teach language and culture. In order to facilitate the swift learning of Western languages and cultures, they had to suppress their traditional language and cultural use.

As it were, the students at residential schools had scriptures and services before every breakfast. They also had Sunday morning service and a Sunday night service. They had a service every morning fifteen minutes before breakfast. At Christie, they used to get up at 6:30 am, and by 7 or 7:15, they marched into the meeting hall for the service. Then, they marched over to the school.

At AIRS, operated by the United Church, the school always rang bells in the morning to wake up the students and to call them to services and other religious meetings. They were 'brought up as Christians.'<sup>44</sup> Christie Residential School was operated by Catholics and the students were always surrounded by the nuns and the priests and the brothers.

Catholic schools taught the church organization, church dogma, religious dogma, and catechism. At Catholic schools, they spent more time on religious studies than any other topic. Gathered from the interviews with the attendees at Christie residential school, religious education was focused on the authority of the Church and how to relate to the Church authorities. They learned in religious classes (catechisms):

- that church is who you should listen to;
- that church is wise and good;
- about how to interact with church authorities; and
- church hierarchy.

Roman Catholic mission was the first to set up a permanent mission base in the Nuu-chah-nulth regions. A large number of Nuu-chah-nulth people in the mid-coast went to Christie residential school, founded by Father Brabant in 1900. The focus of the Institution of Church and the Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church was reflected in their mission and became the basis for a Christian understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth people.

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<sup>44</sup> An Ahousaht male who went AIRS in 1957 (RS03).

When the Indigenous people accepted the colonial rule, they did not doubt that they would continue to live in their culture. Since Christianity was perceived as a part of the Western culture, accepting the Western culture, that is, accepting the Christian religion. Being integrated into the colonial system yielded them the collective (cultural) conversion to the Christian religion. The religious curriculum at residential schools was a regular part of the school program. Despite the intent, Indigenous people had no pressure to replace their traditional spirituality with the new religion. The Christian narrative gave them an idea of the creator. Brokenleg, who served as the director at North American Ministries Consortium at VST, stated that ‘there is nothing wrong with the gospel but the culture that came with it was problematic.’<sup>45</sup> The same sentiment was shared by many.

Comaroff noted that conversion was a Western construct presupposing an individual’s spiritual identity muddling the historical relationship between subjective experience and collective existence (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991:251). Indigenous spirituality was not a system of religion so it could not communicate or relate independently to the message of the missionaries (Comaroff & Comaroff 1991). The idea of an earlier Christian mission was to replace Indigenous spirituality with a European idea of religion or to colonize religious consciousness. When the Nuuchah-nulth culture interacted with the Christian messages, it did not thereby create a Nuuchah-nulth Christian narrative, as suspected in other cultural cases (Peel 2000), but a harmonious co-existence in Nuuchah-nulth spirituality occurred without one altering the other but embracing one another. A general redemptive narrative exists in almost every culture. The Nuuchah-nulth religion responded to and embraced the Christian narrative.

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<sup>45</sup> From my personal conversation with Rev. Dr. Martin Brokenleg, Indigenous scholar at Vancouver School of Theology. He was the first secondary supervisor for this project.



## 6.7 Conclusion

Nuu-chah-nulth faced dire historic situations, along with other Indigenous tribes along the Cascade, at the time of contact with the Western civilization and Christian religion. The situation, unfortunately, accompanied the assimilation of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture through the encounter with Western civilization and Christianity faced the Nuu-chah-nulth society. The new economy had almost destroyed their traditional social structure, and the Indigenous boarding schools had threatened the continuity of their culture and language and traditional family structures. Socially, they experienced a significant decrease in population with widespread diseases transmitted through European settlers. Moreover, more unfortunate was that the time of the cultural change was bound up with cases where their culture was misunderstood and sanctioned by outsiders. In an overall situation where a normal and slow cultural exchange was not permitted, Indigenous peoples embraced Western culture with little choice.

Some cultural elements pointed to the persistence of residential schools. One of the noticeable aspects of the history of the residential schools was that the government authorities and administrators knew about their difficulties facing Indigenous children early on. Despite, the residential schools persisted for almost 100 years. During those years Western education and Christianity made strong imprints, positive and negative, in their society.

The church accepted the government's offer to fund church-run residential schools. The church saw the relevance of cultural assimilation because it was generally shared that successful education of indigenous children was a key to a successful propagation of Christianity (Strong 2007: 52). The distinction between the missionary work and the mission to civilize became blurred (Usher 1971: 28-52). A view representing the Church at this time was that divine providence guided the imperial expansion of the Christian kingdom and that it would bring the increase of Christian faith in return (Strong 2007: 60).

The most disconcerting outcome of residential schools was that even though the ideas behind the schools were based on developing a civilized and educated society, the results and reactions from the Indigenous children unfavourably expressed. The propagation of Christianity did not hinder the process of education at these schools. The government policies and the principles and the goals for running these schools were also decent. The element that created a negative focus on the relationship between Indigenous students and the residential school left something that was more fundamental and spiritual.

The true fear that faced the Nuu-chah-nulth people was the rupturing of their society. For those students who were only familiar with the home culture, residential schools were a very abrupt change in many ways. Displaced from a free and conversant environment to a place of restrictive rules and regulations made them frustrated. However, what seemed to scare them most was the prohibition of language and culture.

As the children were taken away, the traditional family structure faced risk at home. With the children gone, the family system collapsed, and the parents lost their primary function, raising their children (Holmes 1988:9). The breakdown was even more devastating for mothers because they were matrilineal societies. The role of the chiefs was also threatened. Children who had to live in a boarding school for years lost their traditional language and became accustomed to the Western language. As children's language and values changed, communication with their family members broke down. Aboriginal society, which underwent this process for a hundred years, experienced a change from traditional culture to modern society.

However, after the boarding schools stopped operating and their tribal sovereignty was partially regained, Indigenous communities have been trying to restore their traditional societies and revitalise their culture and language. Though the same changes did not occur to each tribe, most villages now have traditional chiefs and a mixed government of tradition and democracy.

Looking at the current situation, the passion for the education of Indigenous communities was high. The number of students who graduate from high school and go on to college or universities was increasing.<sup>46</sup> Over the past few years, the college that only a small number of Indigenous peoples attended became a university,<sup>47</sup> and a university's Chancellor was a highly educated Indigenous hereditary chief.<sup>48</sup> The painful experiences of the residential school did not remove the passion for education. Despite the negative feelings about Christianity that had formed through the experiences, many Indigenous people today professed the Christian faith. The experience of the residential school did not eradicate Western education and Christianity that they had experienced in residential schools.

Finally, the experiences of the residential school, however, left a perpetual pattern in their consciousness that maintains a complex relation to Christianity. When any favourable idea about Christianity arises in a Nuuchah-nulth person, the collective memory of residential schools serves as a negotiator to consider an exit.

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<sup>46</sup> According to the former principal, Greg Louie, of Maqqtisiis School (K-12) in Ahousaht.

<sup>47</sup> Vancouver Island University used to be Malaspina College.

<sup>48</sup> Former All Nations Chief, Dr. Shawn Atleo currently serves the chancellor of the Vancouver Island University.

## **CHAPTER SEVEN**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS**

#### **7.1 Introduction**

Christianity introduced to Nuu-chah-nulth people by the earlier missionaries was in a western cultural form. They had no immediate corresponding cultural terms to understand its message. Over time, they used their own cultural concepts to appropriate Christian theology. Indigenous scholars suggested that the formation of Indigenous Christianity and theology reflecting their own culture was the key to the success of Indigenous Christianity. The study investigated the culture of Nuu-chah-nulth to search for the theological ideas from their traditional culture for construction of a Nuu-chah-nulth Christianity. Understanding the religious identity of the Nuu-chah-nulth people in this study based on the theological ideas emerged from the studies in the foregoing chapters.

The study, in summary, looked at the origin myths of the people (Chapter Three), social gatherings in potlatches and other forms of feasts (Chapter Four), wolf dance ritual (Chapter Five), and colonial residential schools (Chapter Six). So far, this study examined the dominant cultural and religious themes and ideas derived from the Nuu-chah-nulth culture without exerting too many inputs or interaction with the dominant theological ideas lest we lose the overall representation of the Nuu-chah-nulth religious contours.

Now in this chapter, the study compared the research findings to the main Christian theological themes to conclude by addressing the main research question. The study set out to find how the theological ideas found in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture help a Nuu-chah-nulth person to understand Christianity. The missiological interest of the study was to understand the different shape of Christianity by the Nuu-chah-nulth believers, which

contrasted the shape of traditional Western Christianity (1.2). The study constituted constructing a Nuuchahnulth contextual theology. The study followed the anthropological contextual model (Chapter Two) that focuses on preservation of cultural identity by a person of Christian faith and centres on the value and goodness of the human person, human experience as it is realized in culture, social change, geographical and historical circumstances (2.4). Thus, this study dealt with tentative aspects of Christian theology which contrast the theology of traditional Christianity. Having become aware that Indigenous Christology was the focal point in searching for the contour of Indigenous Christianity, the study found the importance of the community that led to the major finding of the concept of *Quu?asa* as the theological vision of the Nuuchahnulth Christianity.

Moreover, the literature and other materials on the Nuuchahnulth traditional culture give significant value to the Indigenous contextual theology because, as part of the cultural revitalization movement, they too are examining them. As they reinterpret and give new meanings to their past, the study also needs to pay attention to and follow the cultural traditions they kept in their community life to date and the cultural factors they are re-inventing. With the search for the figure of the Indigenous Christ, along with the concepts of the Trinity, the study considered the Indigenous religious experience; the Indigenous worldview; and their struggles as Indigenous people. The main study objectives were to locate the cultural ideas of God, Christ, the Spirit, and related Christian themes in the culture of the Nuuchahnulth.

## **7.2 Nuuchahnulth Worldviews**

The cultural idea the study encountered was the worldview of the Nuuchahnulth as the study explored the ideas presented in the story of *How Son of Raven Stole the Light*. Anthropologists agreed that the origin myths of tribal people gave a rationale for their laws and perspectives for their worldview. It was their oral tradition and traditional stories

that connected the real world with the endless universe for the Nuu-chah-nulth people. Their historical consciousness came through the family legends that were linked in some unambiguous way to the events and forces of the universe (3.4). Thus, their stories were sources of knowledge and worldview. Their origin stories extracted important themes for the Nuu-chah-nulth understanding of the nature of God and their view of the universe.

The Nuu-chah-nulth had a culturally structured assumptions, values, and commitment underlying their perception of reality: beliefs, and perception and analysis of reality. They interpreted and reacted on the basis of the worldview reflexively without thinking. Their worldview was the foundation of their culture, religion, language, and society. The worldview incorporates assumptions about the ‘givens’ of reality. Challenges to these assumptions threaten the very foundations of their world. People resist such challenges with deep emotion, for such questions threaten to destroy their understanding of identity.

#### **7.2.1 Nuu-chah-nulth Delineation of Two Worlds: Natural and Supernatural**

The origin story portrayed the world where the Chief and his family lived was superior nature (3.4.2.2). Almost all origin myths dealt with the existence of two worlds, sacred and profane. The Nuu-chah-nulth traditional religious beliefs did not accept the Cartesian duality, but the distinction between the two worlds was apparent. This difference was understood in two different dimensions, not as two fundamentally segregated spaces or reality. They believed that visits and communication with other side were possible with some effort. The difference informed a significant understanding of their view of the space.

The two worlds were perceived as a world with light and a world without the light. One realm was the family of the Chief who owned the Day box contained the light. The other realm represented the community of animated personalities. The world without the light wanted the light. The two realms interacted freely. The structure in the origin myth focussed on the aggregation of the two worlds. This story introduces these two worlds

just as anyone would expect without much explanation. The Nuu-chah-nulth envisioned the world where the spiritual and the physical were connected. They accepted the existence of a spiritual world and a physical world which were closely knit together. The origin myths described the physical distance between the two worlds as ‘across the water’ (3.4) or ‘along the banks of the river’ (3.4.1). The spiritual world was accessible with little effort from the physical. As an apt description of the Nuu-chah-nulth way of thinking, there was no dichotomy of the natural and supernatural. Spirits were as real in everyday experience as natural things. Explanations across the natural and the supernatural were freely interchanged in rationalizing daily occurrences.

However, this perception poses no challenge with the Christian worldview. Although the scientific view of western society adopted the dualistic worldview, religious beliefs are also a considerable part of that society. The Biblical scripture provided ample examples of the interaction between the mundane physical world and the spiritual world. God and other celestial entities, like angels (e.g., Hebrews 1:7), demons (e.g., Matthew 9:34), and the Holy Spirit (e.g., John 1:32), appeared to be active in the Biblical stories.

### **7.2.2 Nuu-chah-nulth Construction of Creation and Ontological State**

The story of *How the Son of Raven Captured the Day* told the story about how they stole the light from its master, but the intent of the story was to create a world with the light. The story was clearly understood by its original audience that it was not about getting the physical elements, since there was no definite element in the story (3.4.4.1), but about ontological status (3.4). Exposure to light fundamentally changed people's ontological status.

Moreover, their lives were so intimately intertwined with nature, they naturally sought to find God in the providence of nature which helped life. They believed that the providence of nature that was inconceivable to them has come from God. It was the Judeo-Christian understanding that God created the physical universe. The descriptions

of the pre-created universe of the Judeo-Christian and the Nuu-chah-nulth were similar that it almost suggested that the nature of creation was about the creation of the physical universe. But traditional indigenous religions were not based on the premise of a dualistic worldview, but their worldviews accept the existence of a spiritual world and a physical world which are closely intertwined. This aspect practically manifests in all facet of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture. This view was apparent in Nuu-chah-nulth idea where the origin myths describe the physical distance between the two worlds as a nearby places (3.4.1). The spiritual world was accessible with little effort from the physical. As an apt description of the Nuu-chah-nulth way of thinking, there was no dichotomy of the natural and supernatural. Spirits were as real in everyday experience as natural things. Explanations across the natural and the supernatural were freely interchanged in rationalizing daily occurrences. This blending of the natural and supernatural realms was called the indigenous supernatural orientation, but the natural and supernatural dichotomy is a non-Indigenous construct.

The study concluded that some of the themes presented in the origin myth was from the Christian creation story. This was evident in the use of some Biblical forms and phrases, such as '*in the beginning*' (3.4.3). The absence of a linguistic concept also confirmed that their origin myth was fused with the Biblical narrative. The idea of the monotheistic deity who was depicted as the Chief was another evidence. The pre-historic Nuu-chah-nulth perceived the collective notion of ancestors as the supreme reality. Their concept of *Quu?asa* connected to the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood showed this idea (4.8.2).

### **7.2.3 Nuu-chah-nulth Understanding of *Quu?asa* and Spatial Concept of Heaven**

The Nuu-chah-nulths perceived the nature of existence with the community. To them, the community was a natural state (3.4.5). Everyone born of any Nuu-chah-nulth relationship innately belonged to their community. As the community was an inseparable reality for



them, they perceived this community relate to the fundamental aspects of their personhood. This concept was studied in Chapter Four as the study explored the idea of *Quu?asa*, which gave them the fundamental idea about Nuu-chah-nulth personhood. The study also concluded that this concept was a conduit through which a Nuu-chah-nulth person understand Christianity in the cultural way.

The dictionary meaning of the word *Quu?asa* was ‘people,’ which was referring to ‘Nuu-chah-nulth people.’ The ordinary Nuu-chah-nulth were called *Quu?asa*. Nevertheless, the word had additional cultural meanings. The Nuu-chah-nulths believed the special status at the end of life, which was also called *Quu?asa*. This culturally formulated idea connected to the rank of ancestors. When a Nuu-chah-nulth person completed the life on earth, he or she joined their ancestors and became *Quu?asa*. The Nuu-chah-nulth mortuary ritual at memorial potlatch showed this belief (4.8.6). Thus, the cultural meanings of the word *Quu?asa* were ‘the identity of ancestors’ and ‘the place of their ancestors.’ The multiple meanings of *Quu?asa* indicated that their cultural notion of *Quu?asa* was related to their origin, identity, and destiny.

It was the traditional belief that there was no substantial existential gap between the dead and the living, and the dead influenced the living. Nuu-chah-nulth people took it seriously when a dead ancestor appeared in a dream, and the purpose of their visit was to help and to guide the living offspring. This belief supported the fact of the belief that their ancestors and the living descendants lived in the space. The Nuu-chah-nulth concept of eternity was formed as a spatial concept rather than temporal since their kinship structure included the natural surroundings of their territory (3.4.3.2).

Here, this idea of *Quu?asa* led them to the parallel concept of a Biblical idea of ‘Heaven.’ As well, in the OT scriptures, the expression ‘returns to one’s ancestors’ was a description used to mean that a person was dead. To return to one's ancestors was to achieve complete personhood, achieving a complete cycle of being human and also meant to be restored to an unbroken human form. Corresponding spatial concept and image was

in the NT passage (Hebrews 12:1), all ancestors gathered in a place, as ‘the great cloud of witnesses in heaven’ are watching at and cheering for their living descendants. Thus, the concept of *Quu?asa*, as a place, could lead them to the Christian doctrine of ‘heaven’ (4.8.2.1).

The common idea about heaven was a destination of all believers, a state of utter bliss in the immediate presence of the Lord. However, the Nuu-chah-nulth idea of heaven was construed as the immediate space where they lived with their ancestor because their culture was more attuned to the nearness and reality of the unseen world.

In the Biblical texts, heaven implied as what was above and beyond the earth (e.g. Gen. 1.1, Ps. 19.1), bearing testimony to the glory of God. It was the eternal dwelling place of God (e.g. Deut. 26.15, Matt. 6.9). The NT scriptures described the ‘kingdom of heaven’ which could mean God himself. Nevertheless, it referred to as a place to which the resurrected bodies were raised. Some texts indicated that the believers already had the eternal life as a gift (John 3.16, Col.3.1) through the redemptive work of Christ, which brought life in all its fullness.

However, if a person failed to remain in a balanced and harmonious relationship with the community could not join *Quu?asa* because he or she could not receive the communal recognition in the mortuary rituals required. *Quu?asa* was their destiny so that they needed to keep the personal identity with it. Falling out a personal social relationship from the community jeopardized the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood. The idea about eternal life was in their worldview, and their destiny was living forever at the community with ancestors. The Christian eternity by a Nuu-chah-nulth person could be perceived in this way, as involved in the circle of the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood.

### **7.3 Nuu-chah-nulth Conception of God**

Nuu-chah-nulths had a dim notion of the monotheistic God, and they understood God in the concept of a 'Creator.' They agreed the Creator was the One who was at the beginning

of their tribal existence, thought of him as the 'Great Chief' or the 'Great-great-great-grandfather.' However, he was not a specific figure in history, but a divine being of philosophical concepts.

This idea interacted with Christianity where they learnt of the Christian conception of God, but because it was delivered as a deity of a foreign concept to them, much to do with the forceful nature of propagation of a Christianity, they felt the need to appropriate the idea of God through their cultural process. Thus, the Nuu-chah-nulth called him the 'Sky Chief' or ' *Ha'wilth N'aas*.' The need for this cultural process was also because each culture could not cross its cultural name for God over the wall of cultural heterogeneity. Because it was only the cultural concept that can deliver the idea of the Biblical God to them, the characters and attributes of God also must be of the culture.

The Nuu-chah-nulths culturally comprehended the exterior nature of God, which contrasted from that of God in traditional Christianity. The idea of God in their thought world reflected their understanding of societal hierarchy: the shared cultural traits of a respected chief or elder in their society. Chiefs and elders had practical authority in the Nuu-chah-nulth societies, but such authority was not to be explicitly displayed in actions, words, or appearances. It is an essential virtue of society not to assume one's authority. Although they may have respect, they do not formally express it. Public respect has always been tacit among them.

Hence, God of their cultural conception appeared impersonal, not involved in actions and emotions. Consequently, the character of God had a significant impact on how the Nuu-chah-nulths relate to the Creator. They have no religious ceremony to appease God or to placate his anger. Neither was any cultural notion of sacrifice. The worshipping the attributes of God was a regular part of the traditional Christian worship service. However, this personalized ascription was almost absent from the Nuu-chah-nulth worship assemblies-- which was a palpable difference with conventional Christianity. The Nuu-

chah-nulth worship often omitted praise of God's attributes but instead, invoking God's response to their needs, they believed the default nature of God's benevolence.

However, Nuu-chah-nulth did not have the complete conceptions of the Christian God, one and only. In their practical prayer life, they regarded God and their ancestors as similar entities and did not have an absolute notion as Christianity ascribed to God. Moreover, in their spiritual life, they sought practical help from ancestors while imagining in mind the idea of absolute notions of God. Therefore, it is more accurate to see that God was a plural entity rather than a singular, and their concept of God was the whole of their ancestor. Only the understanding of the existence of an absolute God stems from the influence of Christianity. Theologized God, or *N'ass*, in their origin myths, could be an attempt to have the Christian understanding. The use of the Icons in prayers in the Roman Catholic Church had similar dynamics of this relationship. The Nuu-chah-nulth concept of God fused with traditional spiritual ancestry. Cultural translation on the identity of God was necessary for any cross-cultural propagation of the gospel. In Korea, their traditional deity '*Hananim*' (Sky God) was used for Christian God. The generic name for God in Mongolia, Buddha, denoted God in their translation. Lama Buddhism had been the dominant religion in Mongolia. South Asian countries where Islam religion was prevalent used '*Allah*' for God. For Nuu-chah-nulth, the best cultural concept to deliver the idea of God was through their ancestors. Nevertheless, they theologically appropriated God in the image and identity of Day Chief (*Ha'wilt N'ass*).

#### **7.4 Contextual Christology for Nuu-chah-nulth**

The postcolonial era of the church, which facilitates contextual theological expressions from various non-Western contexts to contribute to a widening of the Christian theology could not occur without an in-depth reflection on the relationship between Christianity and the Indigenous cultures, and a corresponding Christological vision (2.7). Although the historic meeting between Western missionaries and Indigenous people has yet to

produce the results of the Christian Church expected by the pioneering missionaries, in the culture of Indigenous tribes, the images of Christ in their own right were being created. Theologians from the non-Western world develop Christology from a global perspective. Even within Western theology, some scholars explore Christology through the changing cultural paradigms in the West (Greene 2004). African theologians such as Kwame Bediako and John Mbiti develop ‘Christology from below’ (Clarke 2011). From contextual concerns from Asia, attempts were made to relate Christ to Buddha or Krishna.

The study explored (3.4.8) that contextualizing attempts were made by the religious leaders of Indigenous communities to see the parallels in the role of the saviour with their cultural heroes to Jesus Christ in Christian theology as discussed in Chapter Three.

#### **7.4.1 Cultural Hero as Indigenous Christ**

This idea recurred in Indigenous groups, such as Anishinaabe, which showed that they strongly felt the need to indigenize Christian saviour with their cultural heroes. Which meant that they accepted the universal pattern (logic) of Christian salvific narrative, but believed the same narrative needed cultural appropriation. Shinboge of the Midewiwin order of Anishinaabe people (Ojibwe) equated their cultural hero, Wenabozho, to Jesus Christ. These attempts based the idea that Jesus Christ in the Christian religion as an archetype of the saviour and Wenabozho as the same for the traditional religion of Anishinaabe people. Nevertheless, for an Indigenous theology to stay within the minimal orthodoxy of Christianity, as discussed in Chapter Two, the historical Christ was not to be re-created in another person in local theology.

Richard Atleo suggested that Son of Raven, a mythic hero, was the Nuuchah-nulth Christ. He related this idea to the segment from the Nuuchah-nulth creation myth where Son of Raven became a child of the Chief, conceived by a tiny leaf (3.5.4). This idea was not popular among Nuuchah-nulth Christians. This attempt also appeared in Sapir’s records. Son of Raven was a popular cultural hero among the west coast tribes tied by Wakashan language group. Among the Barkley Sound groups, *Kwatyat*, Son of Raven,

was believed to be the Creator of all things, and to have the power of transforming himself into anything. Makah culture considered that *Kwahtie*, Son of Raven, arranged the present landscape after stealing the daylight from its owner and timing the tides so that the people could gather shellfish.

Son of Raven in the Northern Nuu-chah-nulth stories, however, depicted as a clown or joker while *Andaokot* (Snot Boy) was the primary transformer and culture hero. A trickster figure in folklore were adopted to play a catalyst or to bring some excitement and entertaining aspects to the stories but not an actual historical person. Some stories surrounding Jesus Christ may present certain mysteries, but historical records indicated that he was an actual historical person. Conclusively, Son of Raven appeared to serve as the archetype of all human existence rather than a deity (Chapter Three).

#### **7.4.2 Suffering Role of Saviour**

Moreover, other scholars equated the suffering of Jesus for the salvation of humankind with a variety of ceremonies whereby the Indigenous individuals took on a discipline of vicarious suffering for the sake of the people as a whole. They see that these ceremonies share the universal principle that the individual undertaking the ceremony underwent a discipline of suffering on behalf of the people. Thus, they attempted to substitute the basic Christian notion of 'Jesus the Christ' with the idea which the 'historical Jesus' and the 'historic Christ' were not one-to-one matches but to produce faith in Jesus as the Christ. Given some of these examples of theological logic, it is hard to qualify these theological efforts to be orthodox Christian theology. This theological reasoning went beyond the limits of Christian theology.

#### **7.4.3 Unique Place of Christ**

The Christian view of humanity begins with the doctrine of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God invested the whole of His Trinitarian personhood in creating human beings in His image (Gen. 1.26-27). It is from the Father that the human

family derives its identity (Eph. 3.14-15); it was in the Son, through whom all things were created (John 1.3) that the true humanity was revealed (Heb. 2.17); and it was from the Holy Spirit that the human beings received the breath of life (Gen.2.7).

The Trinitarian view of human beings puts Jesus in a unique position where he does not share with the rest of the creation (2.8). His intimacy with the Father was an innate part of his being before the creation. To say that the intimacy of Jesus with the Father was from the intimacy of the Trinitarian fellowship poses a Christological and interpretive difficulty for theologians who are looking to indigenize Christology. The doctrinal understanding of the identity of Jesus Christ was unique. Some scholars took the discussion of contextual Christology even further and suggested that the quest for a new Indigenous Christology was not limited to the discovery of the historical person of Jesus.

Nevertheless, it contains powerful intuitions of the universal meaning of the Christic mystery. While Christianity was planted in almost all parts of the world, its theological reflection on the salvific meaning of the Christ event remained resolutely dependant on Western thought. While the historical events of Jesus remained the foundation of the Christian faith, we must reflect on its universal meaning in terms of the particular cultural situations of those who welcome the gospel today.

#### **7.4.4 Nuu-chah-nulth Christ: Christic Mystery in *Quu?asa***

Salvific meaning of the Christ event glimpsed in the tradition of the Nuu-chah-nulth community. It was mainly in the redemptive role of the community. Individuals who failed to maintain balance and harmony were the ones who needed adjudication and restoration by the community. Hence, those who committed obvious offences went under communal sanction, during which the elders of the community reformed them. However, the offender was not individually responsible for the crime, but the community was to absorb the offence and took the disrepute on itself. This tradition mirrors the Christian doctrine of the substitutionary atonement. The community took the blame of individuals' sin.

In addition to the unique judicial practice, the community was also considered to be a space they lived with ancestors. Thus, as they recognized that Jesus was their saviour, the presence of Christ was dwelling in their cultural living space of *Quu?asa*. Nuu-chah-nulths could understand Christ in the redemptive ministry of their community. The idea that no Nuu-chah-nulth could perfectly reach balance and harmony could point to the fact of ‘original sin’ (Romans 5:19). The community was not Christ, but Christ remained Christ while He was understood through the redemptive tradition of the community. The mysterious presence of Christ was in the community.

#### **7.4.5 Nuu-chah-nulth Idea of Balance and Harmony and Biblical Idea of Holiness**

The meaning of holiness was found throughout the OT and NT scriptures. Holiness was God’s fundamental attribute. The OT described that the holiness belongs to God (e.g., Isa. 6.3, Rev. 15.4). Holiness was what separated the Creator from creation. God's holiness meant separation from all things of man and earth. Therefore, in the Creator and his discernment, it expresses the absoluteness, dignity, and horror of the Creator. In the use of this word, holiness was only a corresponding general term for the ‘Godhead,’ and the ‘holy’ adjective was almost synonymous with ‘divinity’ (e.g., Daniel 4.8, 9, 18; Isaiah 52.10; Psalm 98.1; Lev. 20: 3).

The similar concept of holiness was noticeable in the Nuu-chah-nulth origin myth. The idea of the creation of the physical universe was unpleasant to the Chief (3.4.2). The stories depicted the Chief as an indifferent character. All the creation stories in Chapter Three shared the point about the reluctant attitude of the Chief to share the light to the dark world. It presented a tension, a tension between the two worlds: the two worlds were fundamentally different from each other. A cultural understanding of God's holiness was shown in this tension.

The rudiments that make up the spiritual world were different from the physical world. Such differences prevented the sharing of the light from the Chief’s world to the ordinary world. The unwillingness of the Chief in the origin myths highlights this difference.



However, to be holy was a Christian mandate, as St. Peter said in the NT: ‘Just as [God] who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do’ (1Peter 1.16). The concept of holiness in Christianity was in terms of moral segregation from the sinful world. Among the Biblical examples, many passages in the New Testament implied that the dwelling of God was in ‘unapproachable light’ (1 Tim. 6:16). The perfect holiness was unapproachable by humans. For the Nuu-chah-nulths, however, the idea of holiness was understood in balance and harmony. Likewise, no Nuu-chah-nulth reached a perfect balance and harmony while living. Hence, they needed to be saved.

#### ***7.4.5.1 Nuu-chah-nulth Idea of Sin and Repentance: Balance and Harmony***

The general Christian understanding of sin was a transgression of the will of God which constituted rebellion against him and an offence to his holiness. In the Nuu-chah-nulth culture, a similar concept was found to be close to the idea that sin was not being in harmony with everything around them. It was compared with the Western idea of sin, which expressed the concept of distance. The New Testament Greek word for sin is *ἁμαρτία* (hamartia) which means missing the mark, especially in spear throwing. In contrast, the Hebrew word *hata* (sin) originates in archery and refers to missing the ‘gold’ at the centre of a target. Christian repentance was understood as returning to the will of God, whereas to the Nuu-chah-nulth, to repent meant to restore a proper balance.

Unusual circumstances of misfortune were followed after the spiritual balance was lost, or the ritual protocols were not properly executed. To have a bountiful harvest, like a big catch of salmon, prosperous family life or any success were attributed to having a perfect and harmonious spiritual balance. To restore the lost balance, the Nuu-chah-nulths perform personal prayer rituals at a secret place at the river, *oo-sumch*, for four days. While they perform this prayer ritual, they obtain peace in their minds, experience spiritual presence, or receive a specific revelation. The Nuu-chah-nulth incorporated this prayer ritual in their Christian practice without conflict.

The study in Chapter Three explored the relationship of the Chief (*Ha'wilth*) and the Day Box. The spray of the light (*n'aas*), at the end of the story, symbolized that all creations were the fragment of the Creator. Receiving the light (*N'aas*) signifies receiving life for all creatures. The Nuu-chah-nulth strongly believes that every living thing shares the same life, and so is to be respected. In the *T'aat'aaqsapa* language, heshook-ish tsawalk denoted the notion that everyone was related to everyone, the natural world, events that happen to individuals, family, and friends, and the spiritual world. These relations influence one another and so are to be balanced in the right way.

The idea of repentance and restitution leads to the concept of justice in the Nuu-chah-nulth culture. As repentance and restitution were understood as restoration, the justice system of the Nuu-chah-nulth society differed from Christian and Western tradition. The moral ideas of Nuu-chah-nulth could not be understood, within the parameters of conventional, Western, religious understanding, since their morality was not based on simple code of law but the dynamics of collective well-being of their community (6.5). In other words, their morality was relational. Nuu-chah-nulth's morality was related to the balance of their community. It did not share the tenets of Western morality, although the definitive results both societies strived for were similar: peace and harmony.

#### ***7.4.5.2 Nuu-chah-nulth Concept of Justice and Christ***

This tradition led the Canadian justice system to respond towards Indigenous law: the two justice systems agreed upon the level of criminal offences of Indigenous individuals that were handled by the Indigenous community instead of being punished by the Canadian justice system (4.7.5). Elders were the embodiment of the Indigenous justice system, which was developed from traditional peace-keeping processes that were in effect for thousands of years. Elders took the roles of contemporary judges, prosecutors, lawyers, juries and witness (4.7.5). Some offenders, instead of going to jail, went to an elder guided retreat. An elder guided retreat was a restorative justice remedy that emphasized healing the harm done by the offence and rehabilitating the offender to avoid future harms. Such

processes were in line with traditional Indigenous views of justice (Justice Education Society 2016).

The community absorbed the moral failure of individuals as a collective failure. Furthermore, it took up the burden of the restoration of the offender and the reestablishment of the moral order.

A crucial theological discussion emerged from this cultural particularity. Since the one who committed an offence was neither fully responsible nor individually atoned for the crime, the idea of substitutionary atonement was not a concept natural for Nuu-chah-nulth to embrace. Substitutionary atonement (vicarious atonement) was the idea that Jesus died for individual sinners, as propagated by the classic and objective paradigms of atonement in Christianity, which regarded Jesus as dying saviour as a substitute for others, instead of them.

Therefore, the community needed to substitute the redemptive role. The ministry and example of Christ were hidden in the cultural tradition of the community. What Peelman described as Christic mystery (2.8) for Nuu-chah-nulth was found in their community. The Nuu-chah-nulth Christ was found in the community.

### **7.5 Nuu-chah-nulth Concept of Transformation**

Nuu-chah-nulth believed the stories of their cultural heroes that they could the form, appearance, or structure be transformed. So, they imagined if they believed those stories could also transform. They could not metamorphose like the mythic animals in the stories, but they wanted to experience different kind of transformation.

Having *Tloo-qwah-nah* (wolf ritual) featured in almost all their cultural communal event, the Nuu-chah-nulth considered the origin story of *Ha-sass* to be the tribal narrative. They honoured this (wolf) dance that made them flourished and never forgot it. The wolf spirit they adapted in the ritual was the source of courage, patient endurance, and bravery. They relied on the wolf spirit to draw strengths on every aspect of their lives. To

remember this reality of which they were helped by the wolves was to be empowered by the spirit. To the Nuu-chah-nulths, *tloo-qwah-nah* was a ‘prayer to the Creator.’

This story could be compared to the salvific narrative of Jesus Christ that offered salvation and continued to give Christians hope and courage in life. The initial wolf dance ceremony was the spiritual ceremony of their transformation to bravery. As they encountered with the spirit of such powerful and courageous wolves, they believed that this transformation could occur. They perceived wolves to be powerful, wise, swift, and spiritual. By bringing out of the wolves, they drew strength and comfort to overcome the adversities of life.

The Nuu-chah-nulth transformation required the adaptation of the spirit. As they faced important tasks in life disappeared into the quiet forest alone, bathing, praying and fasting for four days, making sure that he has enough courage and assurance from the spirit. The expectation from the prayer rituals was the assurance of guidance and protection of the spirit on the dangerous journey.

The concept of Nuu-chah-nulth transformation stayed the same, and it always required an adaptation of the spirit. The NT idea of ‘being filled with the Spirit’ (Ephesians 5:18) was the matching concept with the spirit adaptation of Nuu-chah-nulth. Living under the influential guide and enabling of the spirit was the standard of Christian living. Nuu-chah-nulths would not have difficulty understanding this Biblical concept.

### **7.5.1 Spirit Traditions in Nuu-chah-nulth and Old Testament**

A common developmental pattern emerged, in comparing between the spirit (*rûah*) in the OT text and the spirit (*č’iḥnah*) in the Nuu-chah-nulth thought world. In order to determine ‘holiness’ of the Nuu-chah-nulth spirit (*č’iḥnah*), a conceptual bridge was made between their cultural conception of spirit with its benevolent characteristic and the biblical idea of ‘holiness.’

The study considered that the communal striving of reaching ‘balance and harmony’ was consistent with the concept of holiness in the Bible. This argument began the Nuuchah-nulth idea of the purposeful engagement of the spirit which cohered with the moral idea of the society to which it belongs. The spirit in the Nuuchah-nulth thought world did not have innate personality or character. Their character of spirit was formed by how they employed it in their rituals and ceremonies. The expected outcomes of the rituals determined how they construed the ‘holy.’

### 7.5.2 Nuuchah-nulth Idea of the Spirit Č’iḥnaḥ

The ritual aspect of the Nuuchah-nulth society grew, and the idea of the spirit was developed. The Nuuchah-nulth word č’iḥnaḥ meant ‘a spirit quest’ in the *T’aat’aaqsapa* Cultural Dictionary (NTC 1991: 164). The word appeared to be a derivative of the word č’iḥaa meaning ‘ghost or monster’ (NTC 1991: 135-136). Adding the suffix ‘nah’ (our or we) to the root was their grammatical habit to personalize its meaning as seen in the word ‘*tloo-qwah-nah* (remember-reality-we)’ earlier (Atleo 2004: 80). By adding ‘nah’ (our or we) to č’iḥaa became the word č’iḥnaḥ which changed the meaning from ‘ghost or monster’ to the spirit (Table 5.1).

Here, the appearance of the words, č’iḥaa (mere spirits, ghost) and č’iḥnaḥ (the spirit), and the distinctive meanings of each word, while sharing the same etymological roots, established the Nuuchah-nulth possession of a unique cultural understanding of the spirit, deconstructing the old theory that only animistic spirits existed among Indigenous cultures. The development of the religion in Nuuchah-nulth was also evidential in the cultural ideal of ‘spirit quest,’ the dictionary definition of č’iḥnaḥ (the spirit). The animistic spirit was that animals, trees and plants had spirit in them. But the spirit (č’iḥnaḥ) whom they engaged in the ceremonial ritual was a different class of spirit, distinguished from ordinary spirits (č’iḥaa).

The word *hiina* (crystal) was found to be the spirit in earlier researches. But it appeared to convey the meaning of both in *č'iḥnaḥ* (the spirit) or *č'iḥaa* (ghost or monster). substantiates the cultural idea of the spirit in the Nuuchahnulth thought world.

Besides, the word the spirit was never expressed in the plural form suggested that the spirit (*č'iḥnaḥ*) a culturally constructed entity. A human spirit was not called *č'iḥnaḥ*, either. The T'aat'aagsapa word for a spirit of the human was *quḥačaqstim* (Table 5.2).

As aforementioned, the spirit (*č'iḥnaḥ*) was without an independent personality. The spirit in the OT in its early stage of development likewise had no independent personality, not until it was connected to God, e.g., the Spirit of the Lord (MA 1999). In contrast, in *oo-shin'nek*, the mask procession of the final stage of *Tloo-qwah-nah*, each animal mask in it represented its spirit. These spirits (*č'iḥaa*) had personalities, mimicking the movement of the animals, and showing their personality. The spirits engaging the mask procession were the spirit of a lesser class: *č'iḥaa*. But the main spirit who engaged in the rituals were the class of *č'iḥnaḥ* (the spirit). The *č'iḥnaḥ* was the communal spirit served the will of the community. The expectation of the outcome of the spirit engagement was always benevolent toward the community.

### 7.5.2 Benevolent to Holy

Therefore, the spirit (*č'iḥnaḥ*) perceived in the Nuuchahnulth thought world was benevolent in nature. Nuuchahnulths engaged the spirit not only in the rituals but in everyday life to achieve and maintain balance and harmony in individual and communal life. The study made connection between the idea of the balance and harmony and the biblical concept of holiness. The holiness in the Nuuchahnulth thought world was determined by the expectations of the community who engaged the spirit, not by the inherent nature.

The biblical concept of holiness was from the idea of consecration, being set apart to Yahweh or His purposes. In contrast, the Nuuchahnulth idea that was closest to the

Biblical idea of holiness was being aligned to the highest will of the community which was the perpetual goal of reaching a balance and harmony. Consequently, the expectation of the spirit's engagement and the communal goal of the balance and harmony always moved in a coherent direction. In this sense, the *ē'ihnah* became the benevolent spirit. The Nuu-chah-nulth contextual theological understanding of the Holy Spirit was almost complete in this way and Nuu-chah-nulth Christians could see the coherence of this logic.

The Hebrew word *rûah* was used for 'spirit' in the Old Testament. The different uses of the word indicated that the idea of the spirit (*rûah*) evolved over time. A stereotypical pattern in the idea of the divine spirit in ancient worlds appeared that simply could be assumed without specific reference. The spirit (*rûah*) in the OT scripture, especially in the periods around the exile of the Israelites; pre-exilic, exilic, and postexilic, was refined and spiritualized as they progressed in time (Ma 1999). The evolution of the OT spirit was evident in this study: in the earlier tradition, the spirit was typified as related to the transformation of the agricultural or natural world, but later developed to be more spiritual ones.

However, the spirit (*rûah*) was used in the texts closer to the Holiness of God as the texts showed the vital role of Yahweh's spirit and affecting the moral life of people, but, limited to the pastoral needs of a suffering and frustrated community. The context between the Spirit of God and the nature of holiness stemmed from pastoral care for the moral and ethical balance of the people and their communities they pursued. These ideas were shown in Table 5.3.

Moreover, the conceptual development of the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament as well as in the Nuu-chah-nulth religious tradition shows no indication that they bore the direct relation to the idea of the Trinity of God. The Triune nature of God, God, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, was later revealed in the New Testament. The theological idea of the person of the Holy Spirit was later culminated in the New Testament, through various intertestamental evolutions, including the Qumran texts. As indicated in Table 5.3, there

was no earlier cultural/textual evidence to *č'ihnah* (the spirit) associated with *N'aas* (God) or to holiness. The biblical idea of the spirit was enhanced as it related to the canonical text. Since the cultural narratives of the Nuuchahnulth had no canonical text, their idea of the Holy Spirit should then be found in the relationship between the pursuit of values by the community and the practical role and influence of the spirit (*č'ihnah*).

Understandably, being helped by the spirit was the same as being ministered by the Holy Spirit. The Greek NT word for the Holy Spirit *parakletos* (παράκλητος), meant 'advocate, helper' or literally means 'to come alongside,' it could closely mean as the 'adaptation of the spirit,' as seen in the wolf ritual. Thus, the Nuuchahnulth could draw the parallel understanding that the spiritual prayer practices and due transformations sought in the lives of ordinary Christians were also equal to the prayer ritual and its outcomes pursued by the Nuuchahnulths.

## 7.6 Theology of *Quu?asa*

The cultural idea of *Quu?asa* was explored in the section 4.8.2 as the study examined of the memorial potlatch, *Tlaaqtuutla*. As Nuuchahnulths understood God, *Ha'wilt N'ass* (Day Chief), in relation to their ancestors, the concept of *Quu?asa* also stemmed from their relationship to their ancestors. The cultural use of the word not only indicated that there was multiple meaning but signified that the idea was built to a complex notion that was fundamental to the Nuuchahnulth person's origin, identity, and destiny. The concept of *Quu?asa* was the structure frame of which they had their worldview, so it was inseparable from who they were. Thus, it affected their perception of Christianity and regulated their imagination of the Christian worldview. As a result, their ecclesiology was also affected.

The primary meaning of the word *Quu?asa* was people, or real people. The word, nonetheless, delivered essential and wider cultural concepts. First, the word referred to the idea of a complete, final, permanent stage of personhood which may relate to the



Christian notion of heavenly or spiritual existence of people. They believed that ‘the dead joined ancestors (*Quu?asa*).’ Here, *Quu?asa* referred to ‘ancestors’ as well as ‘the place of the ancestors.’ Thus, *Quu?asa* was a special place. For physical and spiritual sides were intertwined in their worldview, this special space was interacting with their living space. Hence, *Quu?asa* was the space where they lived with ancestors. *Quu?asa* enhanced the idea of ‘the kingdom of heaven’ in Christian doctrine because it is here now, as their living space, and will come as a Nuu-chah-nulth person dies to join it later. Nuu-chah-nulths believed that the special status of personhood was granted at the end of life. It was called ‘*Quu?asa*.’ The dictionary meaning of the word *Quu?asa* was ‘real people,’ also referring to ‘Nuu-chah-nulth people.’ Nevertheless, the word also had a few additional cultural meanings.

It was the traditional belief that there was no substantial existential gap between the dead and the living, and the dead influenced the living. Nuu-chah-nulth people took it seriously when a dead ancestor appeared in a dream and the purpose of their visit was to help and to guide the living offspring. This belief supported the fact of the belief that their ancestors and the living descendants lived in a space together. This belief was consistent with their worldview: the spiritual world and the physical world were interwoven, as studied in Chapter Three.

*Quu?asa* found the parallel concept in a biblical definition of destiny of the dead. Throughout the Old Testament, the phrase ‘returns to one’s ancestors’ was used as a standard expression which indicated that it was also important structure of the OT Hebrew culture and worldview. Correspondingly in the New Testament, the same concept and image were carried over in the NT, all ancestors gathered in a place, as ‘the great cloud of witnesses in heaven’ are watching at and cheering for their living descendants (Hebrews 12:1). The concept of *Quu?asa*, as a place, constituted not only the Christian doctrine of ‘heaven’ and but explained the Christian worldview to a Nuu-chah-nulth person.

Furthermore, the picture of heaven or eternal life that Christians in the West construed as the destination of all believers, a place and state of utter bliss in the immediate presence of the Lord. This picture, however, was not so harmonised for the Nuu-chah-nulth Christians whose ancestral culture attune them to the nearness and reality of the unseen world. In the biblical texts, heaven was implied as what is above and beyond the earth (e.g. Gen. 1.1, Ps. 19.1), bearing testimony to the glory of God. It is the eternal dwelling place of God (e.g. Deut. 26.15, Matt. 6.9). The NT books described the ‘kingdom of heaven’ which could mean God himself. It was commonly referred to as a place to which the resurrected bodies will be raised. Some texts in the NT indicated that the believers already had the eternal life as a gift (John 3.16, Col.3.1) through the redemptive work of Christ, which brought ‘life in all its fullness.’

As well, eternity was understood as a linear time concept and, thus, the idea of immortality gave fear of death that ended in life. If Christian salvation meant salvation for the blessings of eternal life and from the fear of death, the concept of the time of the Nuu-chah-nulth people missed this concept. It helped to understand that eternal life to be a quality, rather than a concept of time, for the Nuu-chah-nulth. The eternal life, thus, was also something that they already had in their worldview and they dreamed of living forever in their communities with ancestors. The linguistic idea of *Quu?asa* (real person), in *T’aat’aaqsapa* language, referred to ‘whole human,’ while the same word was also used to describe ‘ancestors,’ This implied that the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood was imperfect until they reached the status of *Quu?asa* (whole person) as joining their ancestors. The Christian eternity was perceived in this way, as involved in the circle of the Nuu-chah-nulth personhood.

Additionally, *Quu?asa* was not understood as a place in the distance, but as an immediate spatial concept. It was the tribal space. The spatial orientation of their worldview came from their kinship structure which included family, relatives, and immediate natural environment. They imagined *Quu?asa* to be within the exact natural

environment they lived for a long time. The idea of *Quu?asa* adds the spatial understanding of the Kingdom of God. *Quu?asa* was not found in an untraceable time of a distant past but the immediate presence and space.

#### **7.6.1 *Quu?asa* in relation to *Ha'wilth N'aas***

It was Structuralist idea that (Levi-Strauss 1963) explicated the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of an ultimate being found in the concept and the relationship to ancestors, *Quu?asa*. The chieftaincy and the family ancestry were closely linked as they pointed back to their ancestors. The Nuu-chah-nulth chieftaincy derived from their understanding and respect for their ancestors. On the other hand, the Cultural Relativist (Boas 1949) explained the way Nuu-chah-nulths told their origin myths in a Christian (Boas 1935: v). The Christian narrative had a significant influence on the Nuu-chah-nulth concept of the Creator. But it was the Nuu-chah-nulths who appropriated the idea of the Day Chief *Ha'wilth N'aas* as the Creator (Chapter Three). Therefore, it established that the idea of God naturally came from their concept of *Quu?asa*.

#### **7.6.2 *Quu?asa*: Whole Community**

Furthermore, *Quu?asa* was a concept of integrated community, village, tribe, clan, and *ethne*. Nuu-chah-nulths envisioned *Quu?asa* to be a whole community made of every living and dead relative, and all the other kinships, actively engaging daily life with one another. In *Quu?asa* everyone was interrelated and influenced each other, as the meaning of the main proverb *Heshook-ish Tsawalk* (Everything is one) implied.

#### **7.6.3 *Quu?asa*: Justice System**

The communal judicial system was an important topic in the study because the redemptive system of Christianity involved the law, standard, offence, and redemption. What was more important in the discussion was that it was in the *Quu?asa* where

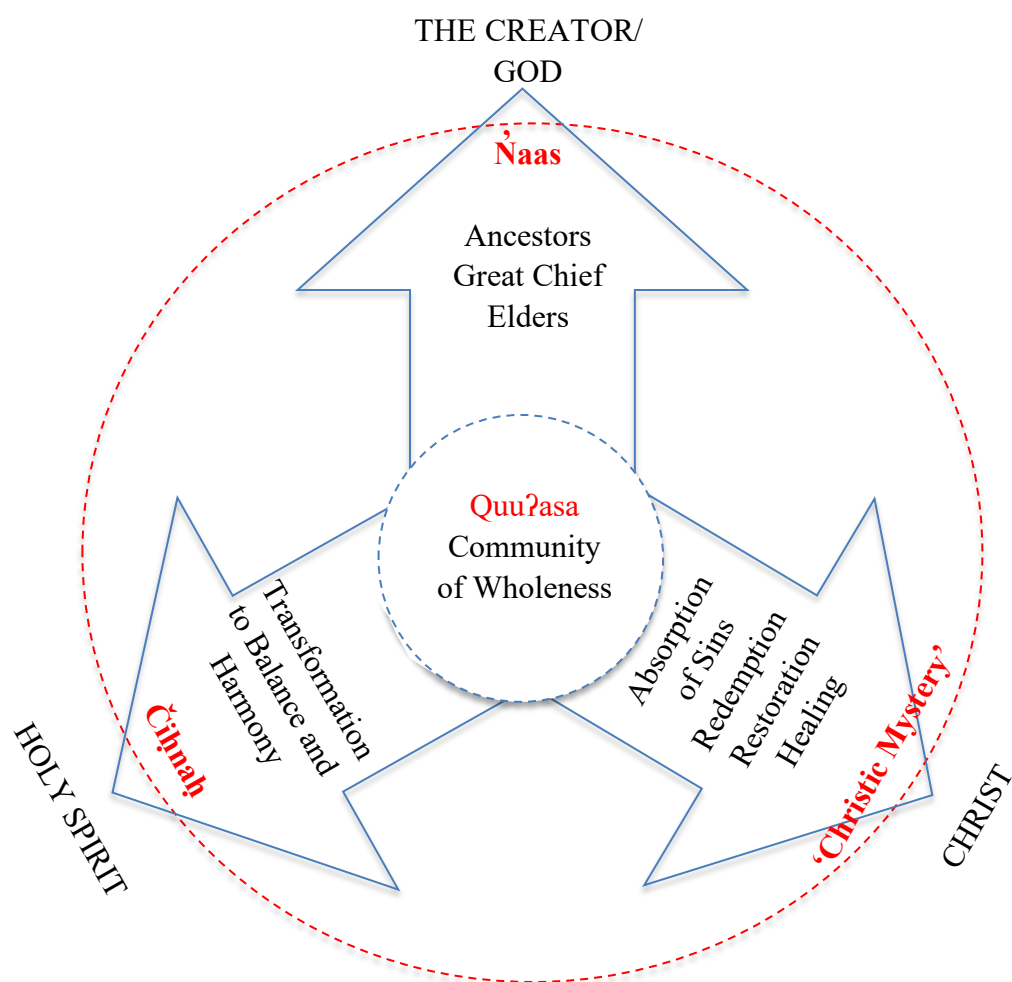
conviction of sin, the judgment of the law, repentance, and restoration occurred. The community was alerted when an offence of a crime occurred. At the communal assembly, families speak, the offender repentantly admits his offence, community elders utter their wisdom, and the community establish new resolute. Here, the wisdom of elders was connected to their ancestors' wisdom. The community assents to a resolute of the elders. There were no written codes of law, but everyone knew the law, tacit but clear to all. Their law was focused on restoration rather than punishment resonating with the Biblical statement, 'for [Christ] came not to judge the world, but to save the world' (John 12:47 KJV).

#### **7.6.4 Christ is in *Quu?asa* and Christ is *Quu?asa***

*Quu?asa* remained a redemptive community, which had its own salvific narrative much like the narrative of Christianity. This fact could suggest, agreeing with Harvie Conn's proposition and St. Paul's parenthetical notion in Romans 2:14-15 (Chapter Two),<sup>1</sup> that *Quu?asa* was also where the mysterious presence of Christ lived. Christianity had an understanding that Christ was the head of the Church. Whereby conventional Christian understanding of 'head' conveyed in the meaning of a position of authority, the Nuu-chah-nulth understands that the head of the community was the community itself. Wherein Christ was the commander of the Church in the NT theology, Nuu-chah-nulths could envision Christ in the Church as the mysterious presence. In this sense, the study concluded that Christ was incarnated in the community in the Nuu-chah-nulth (Table 4).

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<sup>1</sup> Conn affirms that 'cultures are also the means of God's common grace. Through his providential control, God uses the shaping of human cultures to check the rampant violence of evil and preserve human continuity' (Conn 2000: 254).



**Figure 7.1: Theology of Quu?asa and Christianity**

Nuu-chah-nulth called upon God (*N'ass*) as they prayed. They did not call upon the spirit (*Č'ihnaḥ*). Which means they did not differentiate the spirit (*Č'ihnaḥ*) from *N'aas*. Thus, *Č'ihnaḥ* was undifferentiated with God. *Č'ihnaḥ* could qualify as the Holy Spirit. As discussed in, engagement with the spirit (*Č'ihnaḥ*) was always for the restoration of balance and harmony, which was their cultural idea of the 'holiness.'

The fellowship of the Triune God in the Nuu-chah-nulth theology was in its relations to the nature and the law of *Quu?asa*. God, *N'aas*, was found in the philosophical idea from the lineage of their ancestors (*Quu?asa*). The centre of their communal life was the natural state of reaching the balance and harmony. This nature of their communal striving

has defined what was holy. Additionally, the law was formed according to what was best for the community, spiritual balance and harmony of the community.

In this way, Christ was mysteriously present in their community. Jace Weaver calls this the 'communitarian' nature of Indigenous culture (Weaver 1998). They made decisions for their lives through the communal consensus. Central to an Indigenous person's sense of identity was the distinct sense of how she or he fits into the Indigenous community, of *Quu?asa*.

Therefore, the most significant interest developed in this study was the understanding of the position of the community (*Quu?asa*) in the aspect of their religion, ethics, and judicial sentiment. The immediate presence of their community in all aspects of their life posits an essential role in their religious life. Nuu-chah-nulth understood themselves as people of a community (*Quu?asa*). It was their community (*Quu?asa*) that contained their spiritual essence and the answer to their ultimate spiritual concern: they are safe in the community. This notion that they were safe in the community was the meaning of their salvation. The Christianity planted in the Nuu-chah-nulth found its universal understanding of the salvific meaning of the historical event of Christ in the community. The contribution to knowledge was to locate the idea of *Quu?asa* to give a cultural understanding of Christianity to the Nuu-chah-nulth person as stated as the main quest of this project.

### **7.7 Missiological Concerns of this Research**

The fundamental quest of the research was missiological. In Chapter One, the research problem stated that the progress of missionary work in Indigenous communities was not visible to the Western missionaries. The study suspected the reason for the lack of, or slow progress was not to be considered as a failure but a unique shape of Christianity resulting from different cultural dispositions, which was hidden from the Western mission. In the study of the same problem in Nuu-chah-nulth culture, different paradigms

of cultural positions were discovered, which affected the visible aspects of Christian development in two main areas: Nuu-chah-nulth conversion and ecclesiology.

### **7.7.1 Nuu-chah-nulth Conversions**

The general pattern of the Indigenous response to Christianity has varied over time. Some have accepted Christianity as part of the process of assimilation into Euro-Canadian society. Some have voluntarily converted to gain what they saw as the advantage of contact with white society. Children received Christianity by compulsory participation in a residential school. Euro-Canadian Christians arrived in the Nuu-chah-nulth area intending to convey the Christian message through education, medicine, and a modern standard of living. They communicated the contents of the Christian gospel through personal spiritual counselling, prayer ministry, and Bible study. Many Nuu-chah-nulth people confessed that they were Christians. However, the desirable goals of the early European missionaries that the Nuu-chah-nulth would abandon their Indigenous spirituality and accept Western Christian spirituality was not accomplished.

A large percentage of Indigenous people in North America became Christians. This fact did not say anything about the historical and present confrontation between Indigenous spirituality and Christianity. Conversion to Christianity was able to displace traditional Indigenous religions. Ancestral spirituality continues to play a significant role in the lives of Indigenous people and their community. Four categories of positive responses to Christianity by Indigenous Christians were identified: dual acceptance, religious dimorphism, syncretism, and full acceptance. Dual acceptance was based on the tolerance that was characteristic of Indigenous societies. One could give an external assent to the new religion while keeping one's own inner thoughts and convictions. Religious dimorphism was understood as the simultaneous assent to the traditional Indigenous religion and Christianity, and their respective internal structures. Indigenous Christians were able to call upon each religion as circumstances and concrete needs

dictated. The dimorphic conversion was not the same as syncretism because syncretism was distinguished from religious dimorphism by how it fuses the two belief-systems to form a third, new reality.

Many Nuu-chah-nulths considered themselves as a Christian, but not without mentioning first about their belief in indigenous spirituality. Both the Christian faith and traditional belief were equally crucial to them. They had no difficulty in confessing to both Indigenous spirituality and Christian faith. Their Christian faith could form within a framework that can accommodate both spiritualities. They considered hearing Christian messages for healing and comforts the same way as going to their traditional rituals, their traditional fasting and prayer with the ritual bathing, *oo-sumch*. It was also a general understanding of the Nuu-chah-nulth people not to delineate spiritual practices from different religious sources as they think that all religions stem from one source. This attitude toward religion possibly originated from the idea that all religion must have come from one God.

Nuu-chah-nulth people generally consented that the experiences of the residential schools (Chapter Five) gave negative thoughts about Christianity. They became Christians because they experienced positive acquaintances with the Christian friends who helped in their communities. It was observed that after consenting to Christian faith, many became aware of their traditional spirituality since they began to see their traditional spirituality in the form that they perceived from the Christian religion. Conversion generally expected by the Western missionaries refers to the change of a person's faith and transformation through the new faith as the conversion was generally defined as the work of God in a person's reconciling to himself and transforming a person's life completely. The conversion was also in the process of God's moulding us complete his design for the world. Accordingly, the scope of conversion was more than personal forgiveness of sins and extended to the entire process of God's work of transforming us for his purpose. However, the complete transformation expected from the cultural point



of view of Western missionary did not occur. In other words, they did not change from traditional spirituality to Christianity. Instead, the conversion to Christianity gave them a better understanding of traditional spirituality. To many Nuu-chah-nulth, Christianity was not experienced as an alien ideology, but a new form of spiritual knowledge.

At the cause of seeing their traditional spirituality in the form of religion, the Nuu-chah-nulth considered adapting Christianity by appropriating in their cultural terms. Therefore, their conversion to Christianity was cultural and collectivistic. Consequently, their conversions did not coincide with a compelling conversion story as the spiritual and dramatic conversion of the Apostle Paul and were never just about psychological processes but also related to social, cultural, political, and religious aspects of life. Nevertheless, their conversion to Christianity demonstrated that it was coupled with cultural continuity as a conversion was deeply related to personhood. Nuu-chah-nulth was a collectivistic society where personal merits did not entirely define the personhood but, more importantly, in one's ties to family, friends, and tribal community. As discussed in the preceding section, their position in the system of *Quu?asa* was fundamental for their personhood. Therefore, the Christian faith was perceived only within the sphere of their traditional religious spirituality. Nuu-chah-nulth had a favorable attitude toward Christianity and considered the Nuu-chah-nulth thoughts of *Heshook-ish Tsawalk* (everything is one), *Isaak* (respect), along with the idea of caring for the environment and being grateful for everything, as Christian values. Their ideas about salvation by the saving grace and 'going to heaven' were fused with the traditional concept of *Quu?asa*.

In the years of working in the capacity of cross-cultural ministry, the Indigenous theologian Terry LeBlanc addresses the necessity of contextualizing both the message of the gospel and its means of communication. He expresses his understanding of the difficulty we face

Euro-North American for whom the notion of gospel expressed within culture has become like the adage of water for a fish; she is submerged in it but is neither conscious of the water nor the submersion. Though they point out that others live their lives within it, they are adamant nothing surrounds them. For centuries, as a result of such thinking, faith in Jesus, communicated in very circumscribed ways, has demanded a very particular response. When that response was not forthcoming, the existence of faith was cast in doubt— sometimes the individual believer questioned the validity of their faith (LeBlanc 2014:3).

Conclusively, the study learned that including the cultural salvation narrative of Indigenous peoples within the frame of the theological discussion of Christian theology becomes an essential task of Christian missionary work. In other words, to include their cultural stories in the discussion of Christian theological discussion will validate the Christian faith of the Indigenous Christians.

### **7.7.2 Nuu-chah-nulth Ecclesiology**

The traditional assembly of religious gatherings of the Nuu-chah-nulth was held in a circle for the circle was symbolic of their religion. Anyone who came inside the Christian circle (service) acknowledged the presence of God (*N'ass*). A Christian circle was where they brought their concerns and prayers. They used their traditional talking-stick in the circle: only the one who held the stick spoke or shared. Their assemblies were characterized as more spontaneous and unstrained by time.

In contrast, the colonial churches had the seating arrangement in pews in rows, and formal services conducted by the priests. Most of the churches in Nuu-chah-nulth villages were by the Catholic, United, and Methodist denominations, more liturgical traditions. However, after the missionaries had left, they met in a circle for prayer and singing. The Indigenous leaders did not automatically play a role in the Christian assemblies.

The Nuu-chah-nulth people gave a special recognition to missionaries, priests, Christians from outside the community. They seldom organized assemblies of Christian service by themselves because they felt to be at the receiving end of the Christian ministry. Also, since the formation of the understanding about the church was through the Roman Catholic experience, their usual view of a Christian minister resembled a

Roman Catholic priest. They understood that the roles of a priest were important for the official funerals, weddings, and masses. They felt freer to relate to the Evangelical non-denominational mission in personal level.

In contrast to the fact that the primary attendants of the traditional Christian assemblies were mostly the Christians, the Nuu-chah-nulth Christian circles were not exclusively for Christians but the entire community. They considered the church to be a part of their community, and everyone was allowed to come. As a consequence, the terms and sign system used in the Christian circle were not different from those of their communal gatherings. More precisely, the church was understood within their cultural idea of *Quu?asa* for the same reason their conversion to Christianity was understood. Any religion to take a root in the Nuu-chah-nulth society has to structure within the cultural perimeters. Their views and attitudes toward the Christian church were consistent with their views on Christianity. Some preferred to go with their traditional spirituality, while others felt closer to the Christian church. An interview from Ahousaht man gave a window to their view of Christianity

Many people in Ahousaht are Christian or Catholic. However, I think there are a lot more coming back to the First Nation's way. We do not have a priest that stays in Ahousaht, but we have one that comes to Ahousaht. Many old-timers, especially the ones who had it rough in the residential schools had it shoved down their throat – Christianity and religion that is. My mom talks about it. My mom prays to God and Jesus, and I do not disrespect her that because I'm 100 per cent First Nations. I pray to N'aas, I pray to the creator. I do not have any disrespect for Jesus or God. I do not have any disrespect for Allah or any other religion or belief that anyone else has. I'm not saying it's wrong. What I believe in, in my culture, I practice to the best of my ability. That is what I have.

Moreover, the Nuu-chah-nulth communities tended not to form official opinions and let the church-run autonomously by the core group of the Christian individuals in the community. They did not a hostile attitude toward the Christian church. The people who preferred Christianity could freely attend church meetings and worship. Most decisions about the matters related to the church were made by the Christian families who are active in the Church. They humbly allowed missionaries to come from outside to offer services. Generally, they thought that the help from outsiders was still needed in their communities.

The Christian church has been in their culture and became part of their history at least for the last two centuries.

Finally, Western churches with traditional Western forms of appearance and ideas could not take root in the Nuuchahnulth culture. Nuuchahnulths did not reject the Christian gospel, but their understanding of Christianity was only possible through their culture. The struggles were evident in their theological appropriation of the gospel. They culturally conveyed the Christian gospel in their cultural form, to which Christianity was unable to heed. This very conflict seemed the task that the Church of Jesus Christ should pay keen attention to and further study because our missional mandate is not to let Nuuchahnulths mimic Western Christianity, but to plant the gospel of Christ at their core understanding.

## **7.8 Conclusion**

The study concluded that Christian salvation of the Nuuchahnulth was found in the life and spirit of their community. The culturally understood Christianity looked similar to the ideal form of their community. Perhaps, traditional Christianity obstinately viewed this manifestation of Nuuchahnulth Christianity as dual and mixed. However, through the process of contextualization, the differences presented in traditional Christianity and the Nuuchahnulth religious thoughts were brought to the fundamental level where the variances could communicate with one another. Having a Nuuchahnulth Christian theology would enhance Nuuchahnulths to worship God restfully in the cultural environment of the community. They can still imagine salvation through the cultural notion of *Quu?asa* and live eternally in the community, as acknowledge the mysterious presence of Christ in the midst of their community.

Moreover, the indigenization of Christian theology makes Nuuchahnulths understand the principle of Christian salvation through cultural notions, and thus, frees it from conflicts where their faith was thought to be dimorphic and syncretistic. It liberates

them from the cultural distance to Christ that they thought to have. As they understand the most fundamental, but essential, part of the Christian gospel, the facts still remain unchanged in the Christian messages that God is love, Jesus Christ is the Saviour and the Holy Spirit transforms life.

Indigenization of Christian theology implies the change of the theological language and the alteration in the style of Christian practice. Western civilization and Christianity have grown together historically, the fundamental Christian doctrines which have been considered canonical were made culturally. Therefore, they also need to allow rooms for Indigenous cultural concept to be validated. Consequently, the dimorphic religious stance of Indigenous Christianity rather hints us about more inclusive ways of Christianity.

## **CHAPTER EIGHT**

### **CONCLUSION**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

The study addressed the question about the form of Indigenous Christianity from the perspective of Nuu-chah-nulth people in Northwest Canada. Then, the study explored to gain useful insights into the social and religious structure and changes represented from cultural continuity and discontinuity by engaging with the Nuu-chah-nulth cultural features (1.5). Interacting with religious ideas that emerged from the study provided a base for theological dialogue with Christianity. This study, however, was more of a missiological project to consider what kind of Christian self-understanding would naturally form in their culture, rather than a comparative theological study.

For over two centuries, the Nuu-chah-nulth encountered Christianity. Despite civilizing and Christianizing were the two foci of colonial rules which Colonial Government and the Christian mission agreed upon, and European civilization and the arrival of Christianity brought about new ideas to their religious thinking (6.1; 6.2; 6.3), the Nuu-chah-nulth gradually developed a unique brand of Christianity by culturally appropriating Christian thoughts into theirs. Although Christianity among some Indigenous groups in North America developed their churches as indigenized denominational entities, the Nuu-chah-nulth has never materialized a denominational brand of Christianity. Perhaps it was because Christianity was first introduced mainly through the Roman Catholic Church

(6.3), and, as they completely withdrew from their region in the late 90s, there was not enough time for other forms to settle.<sup>1</sup>

In the root of the developing cultural form of Christianity, there was a vital difference in the concept of religion (1.2). Thus, it was necessary to highlight the differences between religion and spirituality as crucial guidance in the discussion of Indigenous contextual theology. Western religion was developed as the one equipped with organized ceremonies and creeds, whereas native spirituality was independent of the religious system but depended solely on the search of higher knowledge and contact with some greater force. Older Indigenous legends were full of stories about the heroes of mythology meeting and receiving help from spirits and animals (5.2). The origin myths presented in the wolf dance (5.6) inform about their spiritual sources before they encountered the Christian religion. Christianity, nevertheless, had a profound impact on the way native people engaging their religious practices. Those changes were apparent in the characters and the story elements appeared in their creation myths (3.4.3). Thus, in the study of contextual theology for the Nuu-chah-nulth people, these changes and differences became the main characteristics brought out in the overall study.

## **8.2 Christianity in Nuu-chah-nulth**

Nuu-chah-nulth Christianity was not entirely formed by intellectual consent, but by cultural processes through long-term contact. Through contact with Christianity for many years, and by the active presence of missionaries, Christianity took a form in their society. The Nuu-chah-nulth people on the west coast thought that they were Christians, and they have little resistance. At the bases of their confession of Christian identity, the Nuu-chah-nulth did not think that they should be alienated from their own culture when they

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<sup>1</sup> In the early half of 90s Roman Catholic Dioses supported to send priest twice a month which ended in 1996, in Ahousaht, Kyuquot, and other sub-division of the Nuu-chah-nulth tribe.

received the Christian faith (2.3.2). Some things, however, in their Christianity should be intrinsically distinct from the conventional Western form of Christianity. Christianity was formed in their cultural essence and understood in their traditional frame of thinking. At the background was that despite the unrelenting colonial rules, European culture has not entirely changed their tribal culture (6.2.2), and the Western form of Christianity in their society grew within the frame of their cultural ideas (e.g., 3.4.6.2).

### **8.2.1 God**

The unique features of the Nuu-chah-nulth Christianity were understood in the ways their Christian ideas were found through cultural factors. The original concept of the Christian God came to them through the image of their ancestors (3.4.6). Of course, having the concept of God from ancestors was a commonly known anthropological phenomenon in human culture (Spencer 1870: 535). Nevertheless, Nuu-chah-nulth incorporated an understanding of God into their cultural ideas without cultural disconnect (3.4.6). Then, the effect was that they gradually became a theistic culture (3.4.6). A question of anthropology rose here, whose view of God was most helpful to them, as in their culture that believed there was only one God? If they continued to live under Western Christian influence and fully embody Western logical beliefs rather than cultural beliefs, what positive impacts do the Western God had on their tribal societies? As they embraced Christian God to be their own, it was important to acknowledge that the understanding of God came through the cultural ideas. The Nuu-chah-nulth people became more theistic as they aligned themselves to the Christian faith (Schreiter 1985: 157; 2.3.2). The theme of the ancestors in the idea of Sky Chief (*Ha'wilth N'ass*) was explicitly discussed in the preceding chapter (3.4.6) to bring out the origin of the idea. Hence, the Nuu-chah-nulth Christians embraced the mono-theistic idea of God due to the continuing presence of Christian influence. However, the term God was seldom used in their ordinary conversation. But, when they discussed God with outsiders, they tended to carry a tone



about God of which came from both their own culture and Christianity. They expressed God to be somewhat distinct from God given by white people. Now, as Nuu-chah-nulth call God in prayer, they associate Him as the Creator of the world, and a divine being who helps their practical needs. They do not feel apprehensive about using their term *N'ass* and God synonymously since the idea of God remains constant. Also, they often call God Creator as a neutral term. The reason for the hesitation was that their prayers were never doctrinal but pragmatic for their realities, which conveys that their faith in God was never propositional nor strongly adhere to doctrinal understandings. As they engaged in Christian prayer service to help in their spiritual needs, they do it unapologetically and without any urge to defend a certain form of Christianity (3.4.6.2). Thus, it was a clear indication that Christianity remains a spirituality to them.

### **8.2.2 Worship**

Moreover, the Nuu-chah-nulth understanding of characters of God was similar to the Characters implied in their traditional view of their ancestral deity in the form of a Chief (3.4.6.2). It was never disrespect or indifference to God, but they seldom worshipped the attributes of God. The habits of social hierarchy explained the external display and behaviour of the respected people and how members of the Nuu-chah-nulth society related to them (4.9). No power position of their society externally displayed (7.3). Likewise, God's wisdom, power, and influence were not expressed in words in worship, but embedded in their thoughts. Because of these cultural reasons, their style of worship could contrast with that of the West (7.6). Western culture was more expressive about internal matters; however, as they invoke God in prayer, God's divine nature was tacitly acknowledged (7.3).

### 8.2.3 Salvation

Furthermore, the Nuu-chah-nulth perceived Christianity within the frame of their traditional community (4.8.2). In other words, the Christian church was part of the community. Every member of the community was a potential member of the church. Their Christian faith did not replace their source of origin. Their belonging to the community defined the personhood. The salvific narrative of Christ was understood through the parallel narrative of their communal salvific idea of *Quu?asa* (7.6.4). This was their conversion. Hence, the Nuu-chah-nulth Christianity could not outgrow the binds of their traditional society. There were many reasons for that, but the first was that their concept of community was the principal reason. Like most indigenous communities, the identity of the Nuu-chah-nulth person was found in their communities (Weaver 1998). The definition of individuality was often found in the tribal community they belong to them (4.8.2; 7.7.1; 7.2.2; 7.2.3) Which also pointed to that they upheld the connection with ancestors. Their mortuary tradition showed that ancestors, *Quu?asa*, were their desired destination as they died (4.8.6). They believed that after they lived in that community and ended their lives, went back to their ancestors, which also meant that they would join the ancestral ranks in complete human form (4.8.2). That was what was their ultimate salvation. Christian salvific narrative overlaps with their tribal salvific narrative. They had their idea of salvation which they were to live in a space where ancestors and living family relatives and spiritual reality were mixed up in their communities (7.6.4). Therefore, the salvation that Christianity offers was not an unfamiliar concept to their tradition. For them, accepting Christian salvation through the faith in Jesus Christ was the threshold to become a Christian.

### 8.2.4 Christ

The planetary theology now being developed is seeking to expand its image of the salvific work of Christ. However, the limit the study encounter here was that it could not confine

to the anthropological or historical interpretation of salvation through the Father in Christ and the Holy Spirit (Riedlinger 1966). The study faced with the question of how as human being Christ can be mediated and deliver his salvation as a historical figure to the non-Western world with different times and different cultural paradigms (2.7.1).

Therefore, the study focused on whether, in the cultural and social function of the Nuuchah-nulth, the role of Christ's salvation could be discovered at a practical level. In the judicial, restorative, and substitutionary nature of the Nuuchah-nulth community, the study found the salvific meaning of Christ (7.6). Hence, the study concluded that since the mystical presence of Christ was seen in their community, Nuuchah-nulth could understand Christ most closely through this nature of their community (7.4).

#### **8.2.5 Holiness**

The Nuuchah-nulth concept of righteousness has a strong tie to their traditional communal goal of maintaining balance and harmony (7.5.2). Since the idea of Christian holiness arose from the Ten Commandments of God for the maintenance of balance and harmony of the Old Testament Hebrew society, it can be linked to the communal holiness, of balance and harmony, that the Nuuchah-nulth tribal community sought to achieve. For the Hebrews, obeying the Ten Commandments was holy. Nuuchah-nulth had no written law like the Ten Commandments, but they can understand the holiness in their efforts to reach balance and harmony the society through traditional values from ancestors prescribed through the wisdom of the elders. The difference between Christian holiness and Nuuchah-nulth holiness also come from the difference of religion and spirituality. The unique nature of which Christianity had written scriptures, and the religious meaning it has given to them cannot be found a connection in Christianity, which was seen through the culture of Nuuchah-nulth. However, at a more practical and fundamental level, the purpose of the two notions of holy may be equated (5.7).

### **8.2.6 Holy Spirit**

Nuu-chah-nulth's cultural understanding of the Holy Spirit is similar to their understanding of holiness. If the concept of holiness is to achieve the communal goal of righteousness, then the Holy Spirit becomes a functional agent for the attainment of holiness. The concept of the Holy Spirit of Nuuchah-nulth is the spirit adapted at their religious rites, distinguished from other ordinary spirits, that seeks positive change in them and has a definition tailored to the purpose of their community (5.6). Their Holy Spirit did not have a personality of its own and was only a spirit of achieving the work set by the communal purposes. As Christ was found to be inherent in their community, the Holy Spirit was also seen in the community as serving the purpose of Christ.

### **8.3 New Theological Vision**

The primary purpose of the study was to summon the cultural climate of the contemporary Indigenous appropriations of the Christian theology of the Nuuchah-nulth people. The study wanted to show that the answers of the Nuuchah-nulths the question 'How can the religious ideas embedded in the Nuuchah-nulth culture give an understanding of Christian meaning to Nuuchah-nulth people?' The answers in the study are very contextualized answers. Since Christianity has spread to the Indigenous peoples in Northwest Canada through various historical processes, Christianity has found a place in fashionable parts of their cultures. The situation of this emerging Indigenous Christian theology is unique. It is not yet supported by truly Indigenous Christian communities and liturgies. It is far from having the impact and the scope of the liberation theology of Latin America and the Christologies developing in the Asian context of interreligious dialogue. Indeed, the Indigenous contextual theologies still find themselves in a theological 'no man's land.' They have not yet found a place for themselves. From the ecclesial point of view, the Indigenous people are still searching for their own culturally-based communities within the North American churches. From the social, political, and

economic point of view, they remain dispossessed peoples. So, Indigenous Christianity inevitably faces this double marginalization. There is no home for it except the hearts of the Indigenous people who welcomed the gospel of Christ and counted on his presence.

The contextual theology, which was deduced from the many sources of Nuuchahnulth data in the study remains highly experiential. Though, its dramatic and aesthetic approach to theology cannot be ignored since it bears the signs of the experiential mode of learning, which is so typical of the Indigenous culture. In the Indigenous culture, to know is to have experienced. It will always be challenging to evaluate this type of theology in absolute terms or from its content point of view. What reckons here in the first place is not the content, but the process: the journey of the Indigenous mind from cultures to their Christ and the Indigenous appropriations of the gospel message. The study wanted to highlight the fascinating aspects of Indigenous cultures, their mysterious and imaginative capacity. To the extent that the Indigenous people of Northwest Canada are invited to speak this language freely within the Christian churches, the entire Christian community will be better prepared to visualize new and all dimensions of Christianity.

#### **8.4 Progressive Interests**

Any ordinary visit to our friends in the Indigenous community involved bringing a feast to the whole village, music, dance, a gospel presentation, personal testimonies and so. The community was almost always receptive and appreciative to the visitors, except when there was a death in the village or other crises. Usually the next day or two after the initial feast brought by us their return feast was held to show their friendship and appreciation. They would feed us with traditional food, such as smoked fish, sea urchins, other seafood, and finally the *chummas* (sweets). Then came dancing squad, all the female members of the village with their ceremonial shawls, to perform their dances with traditional drums and songs. In a visit to Kyuquot, the John family decided to sing all their songs. Their songs were received ‘from *N’aas*,’ as the senior elder of the family explained, throughout

their family history. This was their creative response to the gospel message and testimonies we shared a few days ago. I suspected that they did so in their own worship and expression of gratitude to God. Whether the festivity of the gospel presentation we gave was directly responsible for the contents of their reciprocal feast we received back is undecided. Determining whether their storytelling songs and dance performance are to be recognized as a brand of theology within Christianity is our future theological task.

The Christianity available to the Nuuchahnulth people when it was first received was in a Western form. This was not only foreign and incomparable but also their tribal identity and pride were affected by the way Christianity was passed on to them. For these reasons, and for modern missiological causes, Christian theology needs to be looked at from the ideas of their whole culture or even from some elements of it, as an outcome of the study. Then, the church will become a truer church for them. Their church may never look like a complete church in the eyes of Western Christianity. However, their own theological pursuit can only be done by the Nuuchahnulth themselves. To become a Nuuchahnulth church and to be an integrative mechanism for their cultural ways, the life and environment of the Nuuchahnulth people must be integrated into the life of their church.

Moreover, Christian theology should tell the Indigenous people how they can become Christian as Indigenous people. Undue pressure for assimilation by the church is not only harmful, but it is also destructive (Thomas 1990:108). Along with essential doctrines, denominational agendas and cultural opinions of individual missionaries have been confusedly conveyed to the indigenous people over the years. The church needs to delineate its theology between what is essential and practically important being a Christian and what is non-essential and superficial. This is an unending task of Christian theology. If the study of local theology is rightly done, then unnecessary logic can be weeded out of Christian theology and helped in the creation of a new and more inclusive Christian theology.

## **8.5 Personal Reason for the Study**

This project was a stage in my spiritual journey to better understand the world of religion. Most of the changes, as compared it with me now to when I first started this project, are mainly those that happened in me. About two and a half decades ago, it began as a personal conviction or calling to work with the youths on a small island village of 1500 people. The villagers came to our singing and enjoyed listening to our standard gospel presentation to which they had been exposed for a few hundred years. But they did not mind being entertained by the same message again through our services and performances and seemed to enjoy them genuinely. Often the religious agendas we carried for the village looked small and insignificant before the vastness of the spirit of their receptiveness, generosity, and humility. I suspected that the meetings and ministries that we thought to offer at the village were seldom made in our prayers, strengths, or talents, but rather in the spirit and the dynamics of the people who received them.

The questions often came to my mind: what does it mean to communicate the gospel to people who live in a culture different from ours? What does it mean to convey Christianity to a more inclusive and generous group of people? This study arose primarily out of my own curiosity to know if it is possible for a non-Western theology that uses a completely different cultural language and still carries the essential message of Christ.

## **8.6 Limitations**

Although the study reached a conclusion, I am aware of various limitations. First, the cultural data used for the study is a recent snapshot of the Nuu-chah-nulth culture, limited to its availability and interpretations. Thence, the conclusion of the study has some basic bearing on Nuu-chah-nulth Christian theology but not all-encompassing. However, I tried to analyse the data as carefully and responsibly as possible to minimize the biased results that could come from the time characteristics of the data. My experience living with the Nuu-chah-nulth was helpful in this regard.

Another obvious limitation, secondly, is the positionality. The questions in this study are mostly aimed at answering my interests and curiosities. The questions were formed by my experience and background, so it is beyond my ability to determine whether the questions and approaches were appropriate for studying this particular culture. Nuuchahnulth people, on the other hand, are currently stepping up their efforts for cultural revitalization, and the efforts are political in character. The study reflects the opinions and interviews of the Nuuchahnulth people, so the fairness of the data may suggest that their cultural and political bias are mixed.

The study, in retrospect, could have easily narrowed by limiting the ranges of the cultural areas. But I missed the opportunity to do so. As I embarked on this study, I thought the areas explored were the minimum necessities to render the full spectrum of their religious ideas. Consequently, the study was widely over the map. So, these limitations are naturally related to a suggestion for further studies. Narrower and more focused research is necessary to overcome the limitations addressed above. In addition, Indigenous contextual theology will be developed when similar types of Indigenous theology studies are carried out.

This research was written by a person outside the Nuuchahnulth culture. Though there was genuine motivation towards understanding a theology for the Nuuchahnulth people, there is no doubt that this was a Western approach. Despite the layers of the attempts to minimize the problem of possible methodological flaws, the epistemological issues still remain. The question was whether I could imagine the local theology of Indigenous people without escaping the theological language of Western Christianity. On an equal footing, trying to understand indigenous local theology within the bounds of Christian-centred theology violates the central value of the indigenous culture and *vice versa*. This is where my conversion resides: the position of culture is to enrich the theology and is not something to overcome in order to protect a dominant theology.



Furthermore, when Christianity came to a new tribal culture, it was not just a meeting of cultures because there were emotional issues caused by colonial control. However, this study shows that the Nuu-chah-nulth culture survived through the historic changes and colonialism itself has little influence on forming their local theology. Despite their historic colonial status, their culture and traditions have not been severely damaged or altered. Only the waves of modernization have changed their way of life in the last hundred years or so.

Finally, this study is not a complete study. The longer the time and the better the talent will have to do more profound studies. This was only the beginning. I think that if this type of study continues to expand, the understanding of Christianity itself should be broadened. For now, this thesis is to give more homework than giving answers. The outcome will unlikely to make a difference in Indigenous missions at an immediate and practical level. However, I think it could be a milestone for predicting the change of thinking in human society.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix One: Orthography

The language of Nuu-chah-nulth people is the Southern Wakashan, a language group that consists of Nuu-chah-nulth (Nootka), Ditidaht (Nitinaht, Nitinat), and Makah. The Nuu-chah-nulth language has dialects of each corresponding band, slightly different from each other. The Wakashan language family is made up of seven related languages, spoken along the coast of British Columbia, on Vancouver Island, and on the Olympic Peninsula of Washington State.

There have been various writing systems developed throughout the years to write the Nuu-chah-nulth languages. In the early 1900s, anthropologist/linguist Edward Sapir conducted fieldwork in Tseshah territory, where he analysed and recorded the language. He worked with Alex Thomas, a Tseshah member, to develop a notation system based on Franz Boas' system that could be used to write Nuu-chah-nulth words (Sapir & Swadesh 1939; Sapir 2000). Even after Sapir's death in 1939, Alex Thomas continued to work on a writing system for Nuu-chah-nulth language and sent thousands of pages of language and cultural material to the National Museum of Canada. He died in 1969. In 1974 a practical orthography based on his work was published to help Nuu-chah-nulth people learn their language (Barkley Sound Dialect 2004). Linguist Morris Swadesh, ethnographer/linguist Randy Bouchard, anthropologist Philip Drucker, and anthropologist Eugene Arima have also developed other writing systems. In 2005 linguist John Stonham published *A Concise Dictionary of the Nuu-chah-nulth Language*, much of it based on Sapir's fieldwork materials.

In the last thirty years, the Nuu-chah-nulth people have made great efforts to revitalize and preserve their languages. The Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council initiated a language

program in the 1970s and began collecting language resource materials. Nuu-chah-nulth elders and linguists worked together to develop a system of writing the Nuu-chah-nulth language (NLS) by modifying the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). In 1989 the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council (NTC) produced the first Nuu-chah-nulth dictionaries based on this new language system: *Our World: T'aat'aaqsapa Cultural Dictionary* and *Our Worlds – Our Ways: T'aat'aaqsapa Cultural Dictionary*. Each includes a brief introduction of the writing system used, a guide to the reading and pronunciation of words, and the writing of words in the various Nuu-chah-nulth dialects.<sup>1</sup>

In this study, I will use phonetic spelling to give easier reading for make a consistent and authentic use of the words, whose spellings were decided by the people of the Nuu-chah-nulth, on which *Our Worlds - Our Ways: T'aat'aaqsapa Cultural Dictionary* are based. I have included Nuu-chah-nulth Pronunciation Guide (below) since it is difficult for English speakers to read the Nuu-chah-nulth words and the Nuu-chah-nulth language has some sounds and symbols that are not used in English, and the notation can be difficult to understand, to read, and to say. But I will use the Nuu-chah-nulth spelling from Sapir's texts where the sample sentences from Sapir's texts are in discussion. It is necessary to use them to see the original morphological structures of sample sentences used in the discussion.

I have consulted with Helen Sunghwa Lee, a Morpho-phonologist (Nuu-chah-nulth) at Linguistics Department, University of Victoria, on Nuu-chah-nulth phonetics and borrowed the following chart from Charlotte Côté (Côté 2010), a Nuu-chah-nulth scholar at the University of Washington, American Indian Studies. The chart will give a sample of the Nuu-chah-nulth words to demonstrate the differences in how the spellings in the Nuu-chah-nulth writing system and the phonetic spelling I used in the study. The

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<sup>1</sup> Four Nuu-chah-nulth Groups – Huu-ay-aht, Ucluelet, Uchucklesaht, and Toquaht – also created a dictionary and phrase book, Nuu-chah-nulth Phrase Book and Dictionary. Barkley Sound Dialect.

apostrophe (‘) used in phonetic spelling denotes a glottal stop, the hyphen (-) a break in the word, and the underline a breath sound.

| English         | Phonetic Spelling      | T’aat’aaqsapa Spelling    |
|-----------------|------------------------|---------------------------|
| chief           | <i>haw’ilth</i>        | <i>ḥawʔiṭ</i>             |
| chiefs (plural) | <i>haw’iih</i>         | <i>ḥawʔiih</i>            |
| lineage group   | <i>ushtakimilh</i>     | <i>ushtak<u>i</u>milh</i> |
| Native name     | <i>qu’atsiic imtii</i> | <i>quʔaʕiic ʔimtii</i>    |
| Nuu-chah-nulth  | <i>Nuu-chah-nulth</i>  | <i>ṇuucaanʔuʔ</i>         |
| one             | <i>tsawalk</i>         | <i>ʕawaak</i>             |
| ritual bathing  | <i>oo-simch</i>        | <i>uu-simʕ</i>            |
| thank you       | <i>Kleko kleko</i>     | <i>ʔʔekooʔʔekoo</i>       |
| Tsashaht        | <i>Tsashaht</i>        | <i>ʕiṣaaʔath</i>          |







## Appendix Two: Nuu-chah-nulth Pronunciation Guide

### *Vowels*

|    |   |
|----|---|
| a  | has the sound in English <i>park</i> , or the ‘u’ in <i>cup</i>                             |
| aa | has the British pronunciation of <i>father</i> , the first part of a sneeze, <i>ah-choo</i> |
| e  | has the sound in <i>pet</i>   |
| ee | sounds like the e in <i>eggs</i>  |
| i  | has the sound in English <i>it</i>  |
| ii | has the sound in <i>greed</i> or <i>see</i>   |
| oo | has the sound in <i>only</i>  |
| u  | has the sound in <i>took</i> or <i>note</i>   |
| uu | has the sound in <i>boot</i> or <i>road</i>   |

### *Consonants*

|     |   |
|-----|---|
| c   | pronounced like ‘ts’ in <i>nuts</i> or <i>bats</i>                    |
| č   | glottal sound, sounds like ‘ts’ in <i>hats</i> pronounced explosively |
| č   | sounds like ‘ch’ in <i>chop</i>                                       |
| ç   | sounds like <i>watch it</i> with the ‘ch’ pronounced forcefully       |
| h   | has the sound in <i>home</i>  |
| h̥  | sounds like an ‘h’ made deep in the throat                            |
| k   | has the sound in English <i>kite</i>                                  |
| k̥  | pronounced like a hard ‘k’ with popping sound                         |
| kʷ  | sounds like ‘qu’ in <i>queen</i>                                      |
| k̥ʷ | sounds like ‘qu’ in <i>quack</i> followed by a popping sound          |
| ł   | barred ‘l’ sounds like ‘the’ and exhaling                             |



|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| λ               | barred landis, sounds like ‘tla’ and placing your tongue behind your teeth |
| λ̣              | sounds like ‘tla’ with an ‘a’  |
| m               | has the sound in <i>morning</i>  |
| ṃ              | sounds like an ‘m’ with an ‘a,’ ‘ma,’ pronounced forcefully                |
| n               | has the sound in <i>nose</i>   |
| ṇ              | has an ‘n’ sound but pronounced forcefully                                 |
| p               | has the sound in <i>pig</i>  |
| p̣              | pronounced as an explosive or forceful ‘p’                                 |
| q               | sounds like a ‘k’ made deep in the throat                                  |
| q <sup>w</sup>  | sounds like a ‘q’ with a ‘w’   |
| s               | has the sound in <i>six</i>  |
| š               | sounds like the ‘sh’ in <i>shoe</i>  |
| t               | has the sound in <i>toast</i>  |
| ṭ              | sounds like a ‘t’ with an ‘a,’ pronounced as an explosive ‘t’              |
| w               | has the sound in <i>wish</i>   |
| ẉ              | sounds like an explosive ‘wa’  |
| x               | sounds like a cat’s hiss   |
| x̣              | sounds like clearing the throat with an ‘x’                                |
| x <sup>w</sup>  | sounds like a hiss plus a ‘w’  |
| x̣ <sup>w</sup> | sounds like clearing your throat with your lips rounded                    |
| y               | has the sound in <i>yes</i>  |
| ỵ              | sounds like a ‘y’ with an ‘a’ with an explosive sound                      |
| ʕ               | pharyngeal, sounds like an ‘I’ made deep in the throat                     |
| ʔ               | glottal stop denotes a pause between vowels                                |

### Appendix Three: Glossary

*Ah-inchae-neesh Naas.* We are totally dependent on the Creator.

*Ah-tush-mit.* Son of Deer.

*Andaokot.* Mucus-made or Snot Boy.

*Chu-chu-kwah-an'imus.* Messenger or recruiter (Wolf Ritual).

*Chumus.* Berries, Fruit. Today, any type of dessert, candy, or snack.

*Čihaa.* Ghost or Monster

*Č'ihnah.* Spirit Quest

*Ghee-yah-kimlth.* The Cutting Curve Moon.

*Ha-hoolth-ee.* Land and its resources owned by a Chief.

*Haahuupa.* Teaching.

*Hamuut.* Bones.

*Hanà.* Bone game (Chinook Jargon)

*Hanaatcak.* Bone used in Slahal.

*Ha-Sass.* A family hero in the Tseshah story of *Tloo-qwah-nah*.

*Ha-silth-sa.* News. NTC official newspaper.

*Hatlahak.* Light.

*Ha'wiih.* Hereditary Chiefs.

*Ha'hoolthlii.* The territory of the chiefs.

*Ha'wilth N'aas.* The Creator (Tseshah)

*He-nim-tsu.* A meal.

*Heshook-ish tsawalk.* Term meaning everything is one. Refers to the Nuuchahnulth worldview of the interconnected nature of all of creation.

*Hiciiksey'k.* Torch Ceremony.

*Hii`na.* Spirit. Also, *Haina*

*Hiniic (Hie-ni-tsu).* To take something with you.

***Hinkeets.*** Wolf mask used in wolf ritual.

***Himwitsa Humwie'a.*** Storytelling.

***Humiis.*** Tree.

***Hutch-yahk.*** Feast given by visitor(s).

***Hup.*** The Sun.

***Hyish-toop.*** Chiton.

***Ihtuup.*** Whale.

***Iict'uuthla.*** Puberty feast.

***Ingew.*** Fire.

***Isaak.*** Respect. Sacred respect.

***It-tat'soo.*** A village near Ucluelet.

***Kakawis.*** Killer Whale.

***Kapkimyis.*** A name of the Day Chief (Tsshaht and Makah).

***Ko-shin-mit.*** Son of Raven.

***Klokali.*** *Tloo-qwah-nah.*

***Klukwat'ka-sak'kah.*** Initiation wolf ritual (*Tloo-qwah-nah*).

***Kluwana Eet'shit'l.*** A short *Tloo-qwah-nah.*

***Kwahtie.*** A name of Makah trickster and culture hero.

***Kwatyat.*** A name of Nuu-chah-nulth trickster-transformer

***Loqwon'a.*** A misnomer of *Tloo-qwah-nah* which was meant to mean a shaman.

***Maa-us.*** House. Literally means 'grabbing into the ground' where one's history and lineage is anchored.

***Ma'ixtuq.*** Ancients. Ancient spirit.

***Ma-multh-nee.*** Originally referred to the first arrivals from Europe, who came in ships that seemed to have houses on them. This word has since come to mean anyone with fair skin.

***Minuu'aqtla.*** Evil medicine man.

**Nass.** God. Most high.

**Naasayilhim.** Sky-Day. The name of first woman (Tseshah).

**Naasiya atu.** Day-Down. The name of first man (Tseshah).

**Nuu-chah-nulth.** ‘All along the mountains and sea.’ The name adopted by the confederation of First Nations tribes along the west coast of Vancouver Island.

**Oo-shin’nek.** Mask dance procession.

**Oo-sumch.** A cleansing bathing ritual. This could involve fasting, continence, bathing in cold water, cleansing oneself with bundles of twigs and plants, singing, and more.

**Pachitle.** To give.

**Quu’asa.** Real people, ancestors, Nuu-chah-nulth person, and whole person.

**Qua-ootz.** Creator. Literally means ‘reality-owner’ or ‘owner of reality.’

**Quawteaht.** Creator, transformer. One who lives in the spiritual world.

**Slahal.** Bone game.

**Suyik.** Bone used in Slahal.

**T’aat’aaqsapa.** The name of the Nuu-chah-nulth language. Literally means ‘our world.’

**Tee-tloop.** Octopus.

**Thlawk-thlawk-qwa.** Humble request or petition.

**Tlee-dtsoo.** Community feast.

**Thuchis.** Improper marriage.

**Thuctchish’okt.** Bastard.

**T’iquwit.** Seating.

**Tlaaqtuutla.** Memorial potlatch.

**Tlay-Maak-Tsu.** Esperanza. Traditional name meaning ‘place of rest and healing.’

**Tyee.** Prince.

**Tloo-qwah-nah/Tloo-qua-nah.** Ceremony to remember the Creator. Literally means ‘remember-reality- we.’ Commonly referred to as the Wolf Ritual.

*Tlu'gwala.* Tloo-qwah-nah

*Tsaqmis.* Barks.

*Tse'ka.* Wolf Ritual song.

*Ts'ishaa.* Tsshaht.

*Tum/Tumak.* Darkness.

*Tuuxhmapt.* Canadian Spruce used in brushing ceremony.

*Wocash.* Praise associated with gratefulness to the Creator for the creation and all good things.

*Urogi.* The witchmen of the Meru people of Mount Kenya.

*Uus'taqyuu.* Medicine man.

*Witwat.* Security worker, chief's councillor.

*Yaht-yahtsa/Yaaxyax'a.* Cleansing brushing ritual

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- RS03: An Ahousaht, male, who went Old Christie from 1949 to 1952, and AIRS from 1955 to 1959.
- RS04: A Hesquiaht, female, who began Old Christie in 1926.
- RS05: An Ahousaht, male, who started AIRS in 1943.
- RS06: A Hesquiaht, male, who went Old Christie from 1948 to 1955.
- RS07: A Mowachaht, male, Old Christie.
- RS08: A Tseshahht, female, AIRS in the 1940s.
- RS09: An Opetcheht, female, who went AIRS and lives in Tofino, BC.
- RS10: A Ditidaht, female, AIRS in 1955.
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- RS16: An Ehatisaht, female, from Queen Cove, AIRS and Christie.
- RS17: A Cheklesaht, male, lives in Port Alberni, who went to AIRS for 11 years.
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