

## **Reclaiming Haisla Ways: remembering oolichan fishing**

### Introduction: who I am, where my place is

*Hemaas, knewq Kundoque of the Helkinew clan, knewq Haisla, Kemano and Kitselas.* Creator, Ancestors my English name is Jacquie and I belong to the Killer Whale clan of the Haisla peoples. I acknowledge the traditional territory of the Lekwungen peoples and offer thanks for being able to study and live on this territory.

I want to acknowledge the storytellers of my community and family. Over and over again, they have shared with me stories – different stories – of our place and of our home. These stories were shared with me around the dinner table, in our feast hall, on the boat with my Dad. I want to honor them for their teachings and their patience when I ask loads of questions. Before going further, I also want to acknowledge my teachers within the Academy, my peers, and other storytellers who are present the academy. In the academy I have been offered the opportunity to explore my Haisla identity further, to understand our Haisla stories and to make these stories a part of my career. I am very privileged to be here to discuss and explore my Haisla stories. WA (thank you)

*Kundoque* is my traditional name, which originates from Kitselas territory and means “journeying over the mountain with my belongings on my back.” Kitselas people are known as ‘those who live by the river’, and are famous for living beside the Kermodé bears. Kermodé Bear is known as the “spirit bear” because they are black bears that are white. It is said when spirit bear meets you, you must pay attention to its actions because in its actions, there is a message for you. The old people say that the only time you meet with spirit bear is when Creator has a message for you or if there is some healing that is

needed. You never know when this meeting will take place. You could be by the river, you could be in the mountains, or, you could be around your home. I had the honor of meeting ‘spirit bear’ by my home. I was home with my cousin looking out our window and saw the bear lurking around our house. We watched from the window until he trotted deep into the woods. I believe the message from this encounter is to remember my roots within Kitselas territory. I was shown through spirit bear my identity is not only Haisla, but also Kitselas. *Kundoque* originates from Kitselas and I must journey back through stories to learn and understand my place and my identity and what my traditional name means.

An important aspect of understanding my place and identity was bought out when I received my traditional name. It was in 1982 at a memorial feast in Haisla that I received my name *Kundoque*. This name belonged to my mother; her name was passed on to me when she in turn received her mother’s name. In the feast hall, the traditional name is given to its keeper by an elder of a clan other than your own. The elder explains to the people where the name is from and what it means. The keeper of the name then pays the elder (either money or dry goods). By receiving my traditional name in this ceremony, the teachings are that I will always know where I come from and who I am. In turn, I must ensure that my children understand their traditional identities through *Noosa*<sup>1</sup>. And so it is, with my name, I am making the journey back to my home, to my teachings to re-learn and *Nuuym*<sup>2</sup>.

The honor in receiving a traditional name not only aspires by the actions of receiving, but by the fact that I was in the feast hall, with other clans, elders and clan chiefs

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<sup>1</sup> Action of story telling to a large crowd.

<sup>2</sup> Story-telling to family members.

who were witnesses. In receiving my name, I was taught that we pay everyone in the feast hall. It is shared with us that by paying witnesses, they have a responsibility to remember my name as well. In our feast hall, there are three other clans: Eagle, Raven, Beaver. The *Hemaas*<sup>3</sup> calls the name receiver to the front and then he calls a *Mus Magithl*<sup>4</sup> to stand with us. In my name-giving, *Mus Magithl* comes from the Eagle clan. I stood nervously there, in front of the people of different clans. All the people in the feast hall were watching and paying close attention because it is their responsibility to not only understand my name, but to also know where my name came from. *Mus Magithl* says my name three times, either by singing my name in a tune, or speaking it in a loud voice. When she is done with sharing the history of my name, I thank her and then repeat her teachings to all the witnesses. From this point onward in life, it is my responsibility to always remember this ceremony and my traditional name. It is time for me to journey back to my teachings and re-iterate *Nuyuum*. The story I want to tell here is the story of my place of belonging, of who we are as Haisla, Kitselas and the role oolichan fishing has to who we are as people.

Kitselas is in North West of British Columbia, East of Haisla territory. Although Kitselas is beside a river where oolichans run, their people do not process oolichans for grease like Haisla. When you are in Kitselas area, you hear the roar of the river, and the sounds of eagles in the mountains. During the fall season, the land is damp, the sky is filled with dark clouds, your feet sink in the ground, but you always know never to stay in one spot especially when you walk by the river. During the winter the land is white with snow. Sometimes it snows so much that the snow piles are as high as houses. During

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<sup>3</sup> Male Chief.

<sup>4</sup> Female Chief.

spring, the run off from the snow dampens the land, and the rivers are flowing strong. Sometimes you will see moose, or deer, which are as big if not bigger than horses. During the summer months, the rivers are filled with salmon and the bears are either lurking by the river or in the woods picking berries. Compared to winter, summer is usually mild to warm – not as damp, but still usually muddy ground, by the river, and in the woods.

The definition of Haisla translates in this way: Haisu’ means when you point at the end of the river, and ‘sla is added to refer to people. Haisla is the territory of our people, of our existence, at the end of the Channel. Haisla is known to many other Indigenous peoples and settlers as the Northern tip of the Kwaguilth peoples or at the mouth of the Douglas Channel. Our people speak Haisla, and because of our territorial relationship with other communities, we understand and dialogue with Tshmishian peoples, and those within the Oweekeno and Kwaguilth territories. Another term that we are known as is Kitamaat, which means “people of the snow”. Kit refers to peoples and ‘amaat’ refers to territory or place. Kitamaat is one of many places within Haisla territory. Our Kitamaat name became misrepresented when Alcan Industries built in our territory. Alcan attempted to bring a new face to our territory and proclaimed to be a place called the ‘town of the future’, and changed the spelling to Kitimat.

In the north, if driving from Kitselas to Haisla, you will drive along a river on one side and mountains on the other. You will experience the elegance of eagles throughout journey. At any time, you could see as many as ten bald eagles sitting on one tree. You will also have the honor of seeing many beaver homes. Beavers build their homes beside riverbanks, and their homes are made of twigs and other pieces from the land. Sometimes, you will see black bears fishing in the river and if you are fortunate, you will see the spirit

bear. Of all the wildlife present on this journey, the most fearful is the moose. The moose is fearful only because if you are driving, and, you fail to see it, you will run into it. If you are fortunate, you will see the moose and have time to slow down to watch it trot into the forest or cross your path.

When you are close to our territory, you will enter the town of Kitimat. Kitimat is a company town, like many company towns Kitimat is a small residential planned town. If you turn left off the main road and follow a winding road for about fifteen minutes you will once again enter wildlife and the forest. You are now in *Kuqwajeequas* territory. This is the place where our existence began as Haisla, where the sustenance of our being evolves and our oolichans.

Oolichan fishing is vital to understanding Haisla community, Haisla people, and Haisla ways. There was only one time I was at our oolichan camp. I was seven years old. This experience at the camp has never left me, nor has the passion to learn how to oolichan fish, or to understand where I come from. In remembering, I have listened to many stories of the traditional connections between oolichan harvesting and how Haisla peoples came to be. When I lived in my community I was always active in fishing for halibut, crab, digging for clams, and berry picking. However, other than the one time at the oolichan camp, I never participated in oolichan fishing again because colonial structures took me in a different direction. Perhaps in my reminiscence and dreams, along with stories being shared with me, I recognize the commitment to understand our ways. Identity has to be reinforced by returning to my traditional stories, and understanding of my place.

## Haisla Peoples: our place, our existence

*Huncleesela* was the first man to journey to the Haisla Territory. *Huncleesela* and some of his family left Oweekeno territory, which is south of Haisla territory, because he accidentally killed his wife. I was told that the law of that time meant banishment if death happened. As a result, *Huncleesela* and his entire family would be punished for the death, even though it was an accident. *Huncleesela* escaped by journeying up toward the Northwest Coast of Oweekeno and continued until he reached *Kluqwajeequas* just outside Haisla Territory. It was told in many different villages that the reason he journeyed north was because there was a monster in this area. Because of the monster in this region there were no people there, and he thought *Kluqwajeequas* would be a good place to hide. *Huncleesela* camped outside the territory and every once in a while the monster would open his mouth really big and make a loud noise. As he listened to the loud noise, he made sure he watched every movement the monster made. Eventually, as *Huncleesela* felt comfortable in his exploration of the monster, he felt he was brave enough to get closer. When he got as close as he could, he realized the big mouth was not a monster at all, but were flocks of seagulls swooping down to grab oolichans from the river. This story tells of the discovery of Haisla territory and the relationship to oolichans which is core to our existence, which is core to who I am as Haisla.

During *Huncleesela's* time in this area, he and his family lived in *Kluqwajeequas*. While there, he and his family noticed twigs floating in the river and what they found unusual was that they were not twigs made by beavers. *Huncleesela* was familiar with twigs in the river made by beavers. In his curiosity, *Huncleesela* ventured out to see where these strange twigs came from. As he journeyed East of *Kuqwajeequas* he met with

Kitselas and Kitsumkalum<sup>5</sup> peoples who were trappers and fishermen. The twigs he found in the river were made by Tsmshian people, which they used to trap wild life. *Huncleesala* built long lasting relationships and family ties with Tsmishian people. The Haisla population increased by the joining of Kitselas, Kitsumkalum and Huncleesala's family.

Additionally, the population of Haisla continued to grow with the unification with Kemano people. The *Hemaas* and *Mus Magithl*<sup>6</sup> of Kemano met with Haisla *Hemaas* and *Mus Magithl* to ask permission to live in their territory. The old people of Kemano wanted to join with Haisla because they saw their population and territory dying off. They believed that in order to save their people, it was best to live in Haisla territory. And so it is that Haisla people have many identities and characteristics portraying relationships to oolichan fishing, to Tsmishian and to Kemano peoples.

### Oolichan Fishing: core of who we are

Oolichan fishing is one of the most important aspects of Haisla life, along with trapping, hunting and seafood fishing (clams, cockles, halibut and other deep water shell fish). In our language oolichan is "za' X w en<sup>7</sup>". The old people tell us, our za' X w en is a mystery fish because they are known to spawn only once a year. They spawn in the winter months, usually just before spring weather or at the end of "north wind season". Other types of fish normally spawn in spring and summer months. Some say you could smell the oolichan season and feel a certain chill in the air, which we refer to as "oolichan weather". Another reference to oolichans are candle fish, because at one time the old people would fish the oolichans, fully dry them and burn them for light. The main uses of

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<sup>5</sup> Known as Tsmishian People

<sup>6</sup> Male and Female traditional Clan and Hereditary Chiefs

<sup>7</sup> Pronounced as jax-quin.

oolichan fish are to harvest, process for *kqlateeh*<sup>8</sup>, preserve and use for trading to other communities for *aghingt*<sup>9</sup> and *xklucas*<sup>10</sup>. Because there is so much work, and so much time put into harvesting oolichans, many of our neighboring communities travel to our home to trade or to purchase our *kqlateeh*.

*Kqlateeh* for Haisla people, and to those who seek it, is known as a delicacy. Not only is *kqlateeh* food, but also it has excellent medicinal use. The old people have used *kqlateeh* for severe cases of pneumonia, bronchitis and other such illnesses. They say if you have no energy to work, or can't get rid of the common cold, two teaspoons or 'swigs' of *kqlateeh* will cure you. The taste of *kqlateeh* on fish and other food sources is delicious. However, if you have it straight without accompanied by fish there is a different taste. Having it 'straight' is like drinking vegetable oil by itself, only with a fishy aroma to it. As you swallow *kqlateeh* it glides very slowly down your throat to your stomach. Perhaps it is the slow journey throughout your body that cures any illness that is there. If babies were sickly, the old women would simmer water with a bit of *kqlateeh* on the stove and the aroma would help breathing, and clear the airway. Some of the old people also said that if they did not want a certain kind of visitor (like a white person), they would simmer *kqlateeh* prior to the visit. If you were not raised around oolichans the aroma is often not appealing. Visitors are then likely to leave very quickly.

In the old days our people would camp and deep water fish close to oolichan time. They would set up their camps in the forest on either one of the many islands in the ocean to fish for halibut, dig for clams, and set crab traps. While cleaning their catch, if they found oolichans in the stomach, they knew it was time to prepare their oolichan camps.

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<sup>8</sup> Oolichan grease. Kwaguilth & Tshnishian say *kqleena*

<sup>9</sup> Herring Eggs which is a one of the main sources of food of Kitsasoo, Heiltchuk and Hartley Bay

<sup>10</sup> Seaweed

Another sign that it was oolichan time was when Sea lions, Seals, Ducks and Seagulls were dipping in the water and eating the oolichan, similar to *Huncleesala's* monster story.

Oolichan time is usually at the end of January to the middle of February.

Once all the oolichan time signs were recognized, families began to prepare their oolichan camps. People would then begin to prepare and harvest from the land their fishing tools and equipment. Traditionally, fishing tools and equipment were made from the land. The men would drive poles into the bottom of the river and ensure they were firm and could withstand the heaviness of netting, and the rush of the river. The ladies would make the *taqka*<sup>11</sup>, to be fastened to the poles. This particular type of netting is made of *dukqwa*<sup>12</sup>, and would be tied with *dunuc*<sup>13</sup>. When preparing oolichan camps in the 'old way', the preparations would take up to three days. As much as fishers wanted to preserve their gear for the following year, it was never possible because, while in storage out of oolichan season, wildlife would nest in the gear and ruin it. And so, watching for signs, and preparing gear became a yearly process.

To make the *kglateeh*, bins were prepared by resources from the land. The *Smigatsk*<sup>14</sup> were made of wooden planks with a metal bottom. The metal bottom is coated with clay, which prevents fire from getting to the wooden sides. Water is placed in the bin and left to simmer overnight. The clay and heat, seals the bin so no fluids would leak. No oolichan oil would drain and be wasted. This process was done overnight. Once the gear and oolichan camps were ready, and the oolichans were running, our Hereditary Chief and

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<sup>11</sup> Funnel nets.

<sup>12</sup> Stinging Nettles.

<sup>13</sup> Cedar bark.

<sup>14</sup> Boilers or Bins that were 15 X 15 and 3 feet deep.

his family would go out and get the first catch of the season. When he returned, he would feed the community and give permission to other families to go and do their own fishing.

The first catch was celebrated and during feasting, the people shared their plans for the new season. They shared old stories from other years. And, the people reminisced *Huncleeslas* journey, our monster story, and our oolichan story.

When it was time for communities to fish, their first catch after the celebration feast was used to make *kglateeh* and placed in oolichan bins. Haislas always used female oolichans to make *kglateeh* because they contained more fat than males. The oolichans are then placed in bins to ferment. Before fermenting, the children would dig through all the oolichans with their hands, a cold process, and pick out large oolichans (males), for preserving by smoking and salting.<sup>15</sup> Once *kglateeh* was fermented, the bins are ready to be heated to a boiling point. The elders have shared that they would test the fermented oolichan by hanging an oolichan over a stick: if the oolichan fell apart easily, then it was fermented enough. If the ‘test’ was passed, then the oolichans would be boiled at a steady pace for a day.

This step would be repeated three times in order to produce as much oil as possible from the oolichan. After each boiling/simmering period the oolichans were left for about half an hour to settle. The oolichan fishers knew timing in a sense of how long to boil, and how long to let simmer. Afterwards, water would be added and the oolichans mashed, and once again left to settle. While settling, the oil would surface to the top and the mashing cycle would repeat itself until the fishers felt they were ready to skim the oil. In this step the men would ensure there was enough water added. During this process, the men and

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<sup>15</sup> Smoking oolichans were done in smoke houses at the camps. Salting is done by placing oolichans in buckets with coarse salt. Both types of preserving did not require refrigeration and could be stored outdoors during other seasons.

women together would discuss with each other if there was enough grease prior to the next steps. As these teachings were shared, there were also stories shared of how they would disagree about whether or not there was enough grease in the bin. The women, who were the experts in skimming the grease, knew just how much grease would be produced according to how much oolichans were placed in the bins, and would therefore show the men that indeed there was enough water and grease to skim.

Throughout the preparation and first catch process, there are many areas of sharing expertise that are demonstrated through modeling, feasting, and teaching. Communication among one another taught what type of wood, plants, and places are required to harvest oolichan. The men, with their knowledge of the land, water and what signs to watch for, would in turn pass these teachings to the young men who were fishing with them.

In the preparation and fish catching process timing is of great importance, as well as understanding the functions of environment and animals. Timing included patience. Communicating in a respectful, teachable manner for all people was critical to ensuring *kglateeh* will be processed in the best way possible. Timing included learning how to prepare equipment and tools to work with the oolichans. During preparation, communicating through Haisla language enriched meaning in each step. Repetition was not only important for processing, but also for teaching young people. The entire process of oolichan fishing includes teachings of respect, honor, modeling our relationship with the land, the importance of family, and community. It required that the whole community work together to complete this daunting task.

And so the stories and teaching of making *kglateeh* carry on. The task of skimming the oil from the bins involved placing the cooked oil into barrels to purify. While the

women were skimming the oil, young people were looking for black rocks to be placed in the oil. The rocks would be heated until red hot and placed in the oil and, if there were flames in this step, there were enough rocks. The old people say that placing hot rocks in the grease ensures the grease will last a long time and the grease will turn white, thus becoming pure. To purify further, the women would continue to strain the oil until there is no meal left<sup>16</sup>. This is how Haisla grease becomes white and is a delicacy to those who seek it. It is these final touches that make Haisla grease different and whiter than others who may process oolichan grease

Once the process of *kglateeh* is completed and sealed in their barrels, the fishers would clean up their tools, their camps and then they would go hunting. They say they hunted after the oolichan process so the *kglateeh* would harden and wouldn't spill on the journey back to community.

### Teachings: understanding gyawaglaab

There were many different families at the oolichan camps. The different families, who were at their camps, helped each other with different tasks, which our people call *gyawaglaab* meaning “helping one another”. For Haisla's, oolichan fishing generates this collective throughout the community, we become a collective. Traditionally there were roles for all family members. When the oolichan barrels are *agaheestamas*<sup>17</sup> fishers would either take a rest, or help other family fishers who haven't filled their bins yet.

If families were not catching as much fish, other families who were ahead in their camps would leave to go help and share their equipment and tools with others as needed.

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<sup>16</sup> Any parts of the oolichan fish.

<sup>17</sup> Filled and sealed with oolichans.

The roles of women were to build tools and to put the final touches to the *kglateeh*. The roles of men were to prepare the camps and to fish oolichans. Although certain roles were modeled, whoever could help in each area, would pitch in to help as needed. Community people who could not go to the camps helped out by providing families with food, baked goods or other sorts of preserved food. They also waited for fishers to return from their camps and helped unload equipment, oolichans and *kglateeh*. People who remained in the community were predominantly the really old people, the people who had some form of disability, and those who did not have the equipment and resources to oolichan fish. While waiting for oolichan fishers, community would prepare themselves for the return. They needed to be knowledgeable of oolichan season, the timing and communicate with each other for when the boats arrived. Each remaining family would coordinate whose family would prepare meals and who will wait at the beach to unpack gear. During their meals, stories of oolichan fishing and their experiences would be told. Stories and teachings never stayed only with the fishermen, but were always shared with the entire community.

Depending on their catch, families would return with close to 30 gallons of *kglateeh*, along with fully dried, half-dried, and salted oolichans, as well as wild game and other deep water fish. Fully dried oolichan is known as *tsinka* and families would use these when they go hunting and for family outings (picnics). The fully dried oolichans were roasted over a fire on a stick for eating. When I think of roasting oolichans, I call this our 'Haisla dog'. The oolichan fishing season not only has many teachings, but also provides for other ways to sustain lives and families throughout other seasons.

In the summer months, families return to their oolichan camps for shorter periods of time to fish sockeye, coho and crab. During these outings, the catch from oolichan

fishing is what was eaten. The best part of camping in the summer is singeing dried oolichans. Usually, this is the first thing cooked once the summer camps are set up. On other summer outings, families would take the young people out on their boats and show them traditional landmarks and places to fish. As children, we were told names of places, names of beaches, and other important Haisla landmarks. When we were children we were out on one of these journeys with our family. Before we launched our boat on the beach, my dad said it was okay for my brothers and I to jump over and swim ashore. The beach was very far away and we were getting tired and didn't think we could swim all the way. My brother started panicking and crying. My dad screamed for him to stand up. When my brother stood up, the water was to his knees. We laughed and walked to the beach. The fire was burning on the beach and we started our picnic by eating *tsinka*.

Throughout other seasons, our people would trade oolichans and *kglateeh* with other communities for *xklucas* and *aghingt*. Those who trade *xklucas* and *aghingt* with us prepare their catch in camps away from their community as well. Usually, their process takes seven days. To them, this is their sustenance – and so we complement one another and trade to fulfill all our dietary desires and needs. Other communities in surrounding areas, who are not near rivers of oolichans but closer to the forest, would trade berries and other wild game with our people. Others yet would offer money to purchase *kglateeh*. The Haisla's, along with other Indigenous peoples were aware of what different communities harvested and what they could trade for. Additionally, the different communities learnt to thrive and help one another in terms of sharing food resources and by respecting each other's territories. Although not spoken to directly, the notion of *Gyawaglaab* is demonstrated throughout the Northwest Coast through trading.

## Implications of Contact: our elders remind us of our stories

People of the Northwest coast continue to harvest food and fish throughout the different seasons. We continue to trade, to feast and to teach traditional ways as much as possible. However, our people suffered a devastating tragedy about three years ago. The oolichans in our area did not spawn for four years. Our old people said there were many reasons why this happened. First and foremost it, was known that pollution in our area was a factor. Secondly, other fishermen said it was due to ‘draggers’ who were disrupting the oolichan run. The draggers fished for prawns, halibut and other deep water fish, but never fished for oolichans. If they caught oolichans, they threw it away because they didn’t have any use for it. Thirdly, the old people knew that the cycle of oolichans matures every three years. Oolichans didn’t have an opportunity to mature before they were destroyed and thrown back in the water by the draggers. Lastly, it was not only Haisla’s who experienced this draught; people along the coast of Turtle Island, from California to the Northwest Coast faced the same tragedy.

This tragedy has been a re-awaking for our people and many different things happened and changed. The older people in our community said we needed to go back to the old ways of harvesting oolichans. And, while it is not spoken directly they are suggesting decolonization in their own ways.

I must say that in my storying I have chosen to speak to how oolichans were harvested traditionally. However, I think it is important to speak to the ways in which the harvesting of oolichans has changed over time for my people. Today the differences are: rather than canoes our people use 100 horse power punts; rather than funnel nets and poles they use herring nets; rather than barrels they use pails; rather than black rocks they use

lava rocks; and rather than wooden bins they use sheet metal bins. In all this change, oolichans and *kglateeh* are processed in a much faster way. Additionally, our people are not out in the camp and hunting area as long as they once did. They now fish the oolichans on a weekend, or take a day off during a workweek, (most with no pay). They now use punts, rather than canoes to transport oolichans to their camps. Rather than staying in the camps, they now return to the community to return to their paid work. After seven days, when the oolichans are fermented, the people take their vacation and stay at the camp to process *kglateeh*. With the change from traditional ways to contemporary fishing practices, there is a loss of pre-oolichan, deep-water fishing and, post-oolichan hunting. The speedy and contemporary process of how our oolichans are processed has threatened our old ways, our stories. While the modeling process is still evident, the time and space needed to teach patience has been severely disrupted. Sharing and storytelling among fisher members is now contained to precious and fleeting moments. The visibility and presence of young people in the oolichan harvest has decreased. Through the recent tragedy, our people have re-awakened to re-build our old ways to oolichan fish. The old people say we must re-vive our teachings that are the core of Haisla peoples in our relationship to oolichan fishing.

The old people are telling us today that because of the scarcity of oolichans, and other current circumstances, the notion of *gyawaglaab* has the potential to be lost. They say to our people that rather than everyone sharing oolichans with community; most people keep it for themselves. This is not the meaning of *gyawaglaab*. Chief Jesse, the Hereditary Chief, does not have his community feast after his first catch any more. The oolichan equipment and tools are no longer prepared yearly, and, children are not as

present at the camps anymore. The old people remind us of when the camps were directly in *Kluqwajeequas* where the entire community was involved. They say to us that it is mainly fishermen and immediate family today who oolichan fish, and in this, there is not enough time to teach others. The old people are concerned that Haisla traditions, stories, and teachings will be lost. They are urging our people to learn these ways, and to share these teachings with our younger people. *Gyawaglaab* is evident in our community, but not thriving like before. Our generation must learn meanings of our place, of our people, of our names. As I remember the meaning of my name, *Kundoque*, I must take the journey back to our old ways of oolichan fishing, and to learn and to share them with my children, with the younger people in my community.

### As I Remember Our Stories: re-learning and incorporating Haisla teachings

Since the threat of extinction for oolichan fishing, my conviction to learn the essence of being Haisla has resurfaced. I must go directly to the oolichan camps and learn the ways of my family and my people. I am determined to work with my friends and family to discuss how we could make oolichan fishing a priority in our lives once again. I recognize and understand that in the process of learning, we must look at how loss of language and loss of traditions contribute to the loss of *gyawaglaab* for Haisla peoples. There have been times when I wanted to share with my children the stories of Haisla and our oolichan fishing but could not get to the core of our teachings. My conviction of not knowing 'enough' terrifies me. I recognize that stories I know do not bring forth the essence of our traditional ways. To share with my children is to model how we can truly re-vive most of our old teachings. In order to do this revival, we must go oolichan fishing

again. In the faces of my children, I see their curiosity to learn and to help. I have hope that they too, will make a journey to understand their identity, their place and their stories by seeing me model my journey.

As I have shared thus far, the existence and important attributes of Haisla people is our connection to oolichan fishing. In contrast to my previous statement, there are some of our younger people who do not find it important to know our story. I see the dominant effect of not knowing 'oolichan fishing' to not knowing Haisla identity and eventually to the assimilation of Haisla peoples. I have to ponder here a bit further and wonder how our own people came to resisting our Haisla ways? Is it due to our easy access to towns, cities and urban areas that make us not want to know? Is it because once our students go to high school, our language and our history becomes vague? Perhaps this is a part of it, but for the most part, traditional teachings are not as important in our community as before. While there are a few who want to listen, there are more who are comfortable in dominant ways. To re-learn, it is important to make our languages and history a core part of our existence, in our families, and in our communities.

Language is one way our parents and others could re-tell our Creation stories. Last summer I traveled on a gill-netter with my father for twelve hours to Kitasoo. During this twelve-hour ride he shared stories of many locations that represented land and water. I must say that although the islands, trees and bodies of water looked the same to me, he identified specific areas that represent important landmarks for our history as Haisla. I was saddened because I saw how he wanted to share and explain to me in Haisla, the meaning of these places that are difficult to translate into English. Nevertheless, I heard the story in English and got the jist of the history. I have learned from this experience on the boat that

I must learn our language in order to re-tell our history to our young people. This boat ride also reminded me that as a young person these places were shown to me before. I have learned that in storytelling we need to hear stories over and over again.

Although our stories have become affected by pollution in many of our traditional places, our stories are still alive and we must learn how to re-tell them to our children and grand children.

### Vision: not giving up!

I remember as a child, I was involved in harvesting oolichans and making oolichan grease. I was about 7 years of age. We were still able to fish right in the mouth of *Kluqwajeequas*. Our family camp was set up on the beach and there were other families who were around us. At the camp, people worked hard at packing and fishing oolichans, keeping the fires going, preparing the oolichan bins. There were other people who were maintaining food supplies by cooking and feeding everyone. I too, had my own oolichan bucket and the job of packing oolichans. This experience and stories that were shared with me right now are at a distance. But, these teachings have remained at the core of my heart and commitment to re-learn our ways. It was not too long ago that I experienced this and, indeed I do look at this memory as a place of hope and important journey. The translation of *Kundoque* has resurfaced for me to make this journey. The meaning of my name “journeying over the mountain with belongings on my back”, is the analogy I use to carrying forth the teachings of oolichan fishing, language and place to our future. Through my story, through my children’s story we will be able to keep our historical place a part of who we are as Haisla, as Kitselas, as Kemano and our relationship to oolichan fishing.