I’m not learning a second language, I’m learning my language: Being Kwakw̓a̱k̓a’wakw and learning Kwak’wala

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This Presentation

• purpose of research
• locate myself and my language
• methodology and method
• learnings
• reflections
Quilt Square
Purpose of the Research

Through Indigenous methodology based on the metaphor of creating Ḵaŋgextola, this is a study of my journey of learning and speaking Kwak’wala.

The Purpose: to better understand what supports Kwak’wala learning and speaking.

“I approach my work through my identity, which is built upon where I come from, who I belong to, and my relationships within family and community.”
Kwak’wala: The language of the Kwakwāka’wakw

The language of 15 FNs of Northern Vancouver Island and the adjacent mainland.

Considered by FPHLCC to be endangered.

Estimated 148 fluent speakers – most of these speakers are elderly.

Documented for more than a century.

Revitalization work for more than three decades.
Methodology and Method

Methodology

Kwakw̓ak̓a’wakw approaches to knowledge

The need for a methodology that would align with Kwakw̓ak̓a’wakw ways

Ḵʷ坭extola – ceremonial regalia of the Kwakw̓ak̓a’wakw and other Indigenous peoples of the northwest coast

Ḵʷ坭extola – as a product and a process rich in story
Kangextola – sewn-on-top

-tsikwi design, Rande Cook and John Livingston; border design, John Livingston and Trish Rosborough; stitching, Maxine’bidu, Maxine’dzi, and Trish Rosborough
Methodology and Method

Method

- Documented my journey as a Kwak’wala learner
- Including 2 years in a Master–Apprentice relationship
- Created and shared stories of my journey
- Interviewed 6 community members who are engaged in Kwak’wala revitalization
My Grandmothers’ Buttons
Understanding the context within which Kwak’wala revitalization occurs: the impacts of colonization
Hidden
“I’m not learning a second language, I am learning my language”
“the fear of criticism is a real barrier...one of the primary barriers to reviving Kwak’wala” Marianne Nicolson
“...and that’s one of the reasons my dad won’t speak, ‘cause he says that his cousins will laugh at him” Kwakw̓ak̓a’wakw community member
“wiga’xan’s ‘wila yak’antala san’s yak’andas”
Andrea Alfred-Smith
“there does not seem to be enough motivation at the community level to do what needs to be done to revive the language” Anonby
For Kwak’wala revitalization to be decolonizing, it is important to sustain the spirit of the language.
“If you’re going to give a potlatch and you’re the chief, and after your potlatch is over, the chief gets up to make a speech, and he just speaks English. I don’t agree with that.” Beverly Lagis
“It grounds me...takes the past and brings it forward, or brings it here with me.” Emily Aitken
“I really wish I could share that ‘Aha!’ You know, like, ‘wow, this is amazing!’”
Marianne Nicolson
Lagwił
atlı
The Lifeline: Reflections
Lax̧̣ hasayesida
Kwak’wala
Trish Rosborough
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https://circle.ubc.ca/handle/2429/42965