

**Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization Goals:  
Integrating Indigenous Knowledge and Schools<sup>1</sup>  
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**0.0. Introduction**

Eke Me Xi Learning Centre is a high school located on the Tsulquate reserve. There are approximately 50 students in the school, most of whom come from the G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ńak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> Nation. In this community, children and most adults speak English as their first language. The school provides instruction in the traditional language, referred to as Bak<sup>w</sup>əmka<sup>l</sup>a, more commonly known as K<sup>w</sup>ak<sup>w</sup>ala. Many language teachers are second language learners.

The G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ńak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> Nation is composed to two separate communities originally located on the mainland coast of British Columbia, Canada. In 1964 the G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla and the Ńak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> were amalgamated and relocated to their current reserve next to Port Hardy, B.C. (G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla / Ńak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup>. (2014).

Illustration 1: Map of G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ńak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> Territory and Current Reserve



Their story is similar to many indigenous peoples, and their long term goal is to reconnect with their traditional location, traditions, and language.

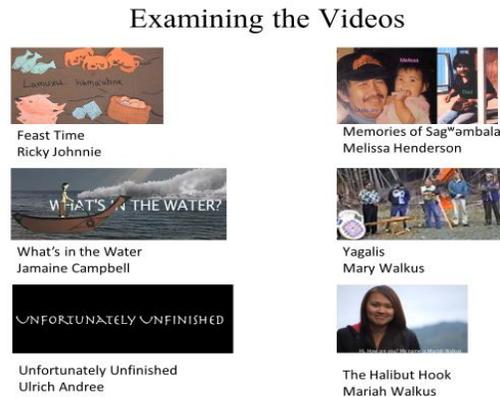
This study focuses on a film studies unit in the technology curriculum at Eke Me Xi. The goal of the unit is for students to develop a two minute stop motion video that connects with

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<sup>1</sup> This paper integrates the powerpoint and speaking notes from a presentation delivered on March 3, 2017, ICLDC5, University of Hawai'i, Manoa. It is shortened from a larger work in progress that examines the utility of Activity Theory and Situated Learning to assist the development of integrated "Two-World View" based programming. Please send comments and suggestions to peterjwilson3@cmail.carleton.ca.

traditional language and culture. The film studies program began in 2013 and takes place most years over a one week period. During the week, students develop a concept of their project and collaborate with elders. They are supported by a professional film / animation crew, school staff, and the community. Typically, students choose to create projects that relate to their families, their community, and the traditional territories and social activities.

Illustration 2: Eke Me Xi 2013 Videos



Eke Me Xi. (2013)

I first viewed the videos during a visit with friends at Tsulquate in 2014. At the time, I found the videos full of traditional and cultural information. Since that time, I have volunteered at the school as well as collaborating with elders to develop a greater appreciation of the video activity for students, the community, and the preservation of the culture and language.

### 0.1 Eke Me Xi Planning and Curriculum

Eke Me Xi Learning Centre has adopted an educational planning model similar to the “Two World View” adopted for Hawaiian schools (see Wilson and Kamanā, 2014).

Illustration 3: Photos Illustrating Two World View, 2015



Nawahi School, Hilo (2015), author

In brief, a Two World Model is designed so that students meet the overall expectations of the state/provincial educational system, and use the traditional language as the medium of instruction. A two world view seeks to enable students to participate in both "worlds." Activities in such a model employ the language and traditions not only as a goal of instruction, but also as a medium of instruction. A traditional world view, in the sense used by Wilson and Kamanā (2014), incorporates indigenous activities and knowledge within the curricular context of schools.

The Eke Me Xi school plan aims to build capacity among the staff in order to integrate indigenous language and cultural content throughout school activities (Eke Me Xi School Plan, 2016-2017). G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ñak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> traditions, locations, language, and history serve as a means and medium for subject content. Examples include foods, ecology, literature, science, and film / animation technology. At the moment, the school is beginning to integrate language activities into literature, film, and science. Most importantly, school wide values and daily routines are being developed to support social and cultural traditions, such as honoring elders and respect for their community.

## **0.2 Purpose**

This study examines the video projects in order to uncover how the traditional language and culture are integrated into technology course content. The goal is to answer the question, "what can we learn from the videos in order to plan, develop, and improve opportunities for language at school?" The results of the examination are used to guide curriculum and programming development. The videos serve as examples, and as "intercultural artifacts" that demonstrate clues as to how the "two worlds" can be connected.

## **1.0 Learning Theory and the G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ñak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> World View**

In order to best approach an examination of the videos, it was important to adopt a model that respects the G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ñak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> world view and language. The elders council at G<sup>w</sup>aʔsəla-Ñak<sup>w</sup>axdaʔǰ<sup>w</sup> were clear that language, culture, locations, settings, and traditions are seen as interconnected and inseparable. Their knowledge recognizes that communication and effective learning occurs when activities are authentic and situated in meaningful contexts. Providing effective traditional language and culture into school settings, therefore, requires activities that

bridge between a student's "world view," and learning goals. Illustration 4 depicts the Traditional Territory.

Illustration 4: Traditional Territory



Eke Me Xi (2014)

The theory used in this project respects and builds on the elders advice. A theory functions as an additional support to approach the research. In this study, I chose to frame the inquiry based on the work of Vygotsky (1986). Vygotsky's work recognizes that communication occurs while we engage in activities with others. Each activity, such as fishing for halibut or digging clams with ones family, is a system composed of situations, locations, roles, settings, personal inter-connections, history, and language. The current theory is referred to as "Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)." CHAT recognizes that communication is integrated with our activities, and recognizes that our current activities are shaped not only in the present, but also by our past (e.g. Engeström, 1987, Yamagata-Lynch, 2010). When we examine an activity, the "unit" of study must pay attention to all aspects of communication. This is a very different approach from theoretical linguistics, which tends to study "units" of specific aspects of language, such as sound systems, and disconnects language from the activities in which it is used.

## 2.0 Methods

Elders were consulted to assist with identifying culturally appropriate traditional language and activities found in the videos. Each language or traditional item was written down along with

the amount of time it occurred on the timeline.<sup>2</sup> For example, if the video presented a map of a traditional area four seconds, then that information was noted. See Illustration 5 below:

### Illustration 5: Multi-Modal Information

#### Social and Cultural Traditions

The examination revealed numerous examples of culturally and socially appropriate multimodal information:



Photos from Eke Me Xi Videos, 2013



- Maps of Traditional areas
- Place-Names
- Tribe Names



- Photos of peoples and traditions
- Cultural Activities and Values

In addition, when several culturally appropriate items occurred simultaneously, they were noted as overlapping. Overlapping visual and auditory information strengthens or foregrounds the presentation. (Norris, 2004, Van Leeuwen, 2005).

### Illustration 6: Example of Overlapping Multimodal Information

#### Foregrounding and Modal Density



Capture from Eke Me Xi Videos, 2013

Illustration 6 above elaborates and details information about a floathouse, drawn by the elder, and provides "extension," i.e. background details about the location (from Van Leeuwen, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> Items on the timeline were coded following procedures from Saldaña (2016).

The overlapping information includes splashing of oars, as well as details of the surrounding area at Sag<sup>w</sup>əmbala and the dugouts used for transportation around the 1950's.

Greater degrees of foregrounding are often represented numerically and depicted visually as darker bars, as noted in Illustration 7 (following Tufte, 1985).

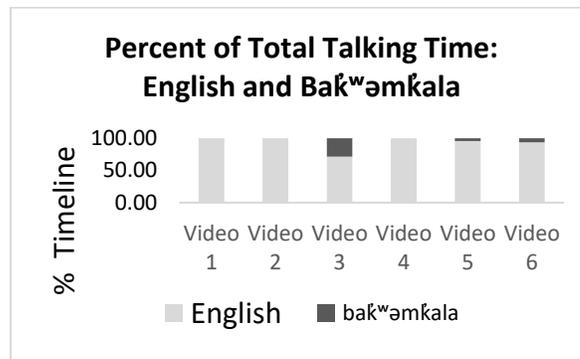
Illustration 7: Shading representing greater amounts of overlapping information



### 3.0 Results: Language

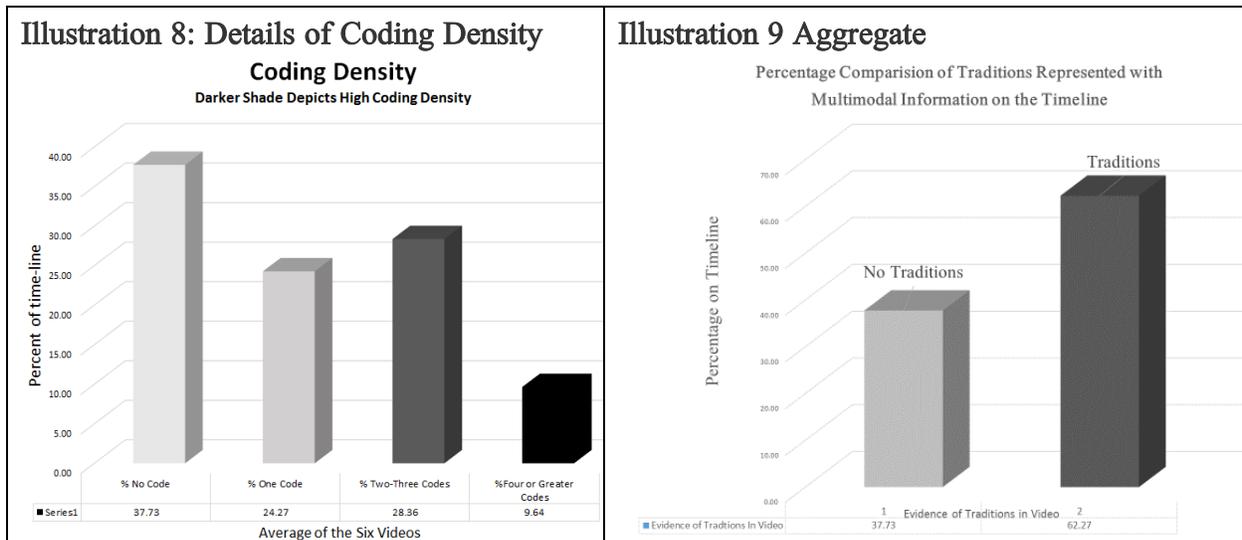
The use Bak<sup>w</sup>əmkala was confined to slightly less than 10% of the total language based time segments of the videos, and only three videos provided audio tracks with Bak<sup>w</sup>əmkala.

Illustration 8: Language Comparison



### 3.1 Results: Social/Cultural

The social / cultural coding demonstrated numerous examples of traditional information. In addition, overlapping culturally appropriate information foregrounded traditions through 38% of the average timeline, with simultaneous coding of 2 to 3 codes on 28.36% of the time-line, and 4 or more codes on 9.64% of the time-line. This is portrayed in Illustration 8, where density of coding is indicated by the darker shades (see below). In aggregate, over 62 % of the timeline contains traditional and culturally appropriate information. This is noted in illustration 9.



#### 4.0 Analysis

The videos provide evidence that the students provided audio and video items deemed significant by the elders. The examples of these traditions include:

- Traditional territory
- Traditional activities, stories, and artifacts
- Social and cultural activities and values
- Use of tribe and family names
- Place names
- Names traditional areas

In addition, the traditional activities, settings, and language that the elders indicated were fundamental to their world view, were reflected in the videos through multimodal presentation occurring in 62% of the average timeline.

#### 5.0 Conclusion

The videos produced at the Eke Me Xi School provide exemplars of revitalization activities that are in sync with the revitalization goals noted by the Elders Council. In addition, the video activity provides a medium for students to experience and meet provincial curriculum expectations. The students build on traditional knowledge while they learn video techniques in a “school-based” model. This all occurs in a setting that engages connections and context, thereby overcoming the constraints of education, which often decontextualize learning activities (Rogoff, 2013).

In conclusion, Gwaʔsəla / Nákʷaxdaʔxʷ revitalization activities reveal that traditional learning practices can be integrated into subject content in schools. At the same time, language acquisition occurs through context, connection with traditions, and collaboration between elders and students. It would seem prudent, therefore, to continue this method as one among the core strategies for language and culture revitalization.

## 6.0 Recommendations and Next Steps

The results of the video analysis were presented and reviewed with the Elders Council in May, 2016. The following conclusions and recommendations were noted at that meeting.

### Conclusions

- The videos are an effective revitalization activity
- Revitalization activities need to be in context
- The elders as experts and students as apprentices represent an effective model for student learning and revitalization development
- Student learning supports revitalization

### Next Steps

- Translate videos into Bakʷəmkála
- Language activities for students to develop videos with more language

In the fall and winter (2016-2017), I began volunteering at Eke Me Xi assisting school staff and students to further integrate language and culture with the school curriculum. In addition, we have been planning for further video activities.

Most recently, (February-present, 2017), the school has begun a clam gathering, cooking, and preservation initiative. This activity is integrated into science, foods, and ecology courses. For example, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are learning about tides and phases of the moon in their science classes, while acquiring vocabulary and phrases in the Bakʷəmkála class. Traditional language and knowledge that is acquired in the language class is reinforced in the science class, where language and traditional activities provide a medium for students to meet expectations of the Provincial curriculum.

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