



University
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination
for the Degree of Master of Arts

of

CATHERINE DWORAK

BA (Concordia University, 2009)

“Limxhl Hlgu Wo'omhlxw
Song of the Newborn
Knowledge and Stories Surrounding Pregnancy, Childbirth,
and the Newborn
A Collaborative Language Project”

Department of Linguistics

Tuesday, January 9, 2018

4:00 P.M.

Clearihue Building

Room B007

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Suzanne Urbanczyk, Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria (Supervisor)
Dr. Leslie Butt, Department of Anthropology, UVic (Outside Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Hélène Cazes, Department of French, UVic

Chair of Oral Examination:

Dr. Wanda Hurren, Department of Curriculum and Instruction, UVic

Abstract

The *Limxhl Hlgu Wo'omhlxw* (Song of the Newborn) project is situated on *Lax Yipxwhl Gitxsan* (Gitxsan Territory) and embraces a decolonizing and Indigenist (Wilson, 2007) methodology. The project is a collaboration between Catherine Dworak (me), the graduate student, and Dr. M.J. Smith, educator and Gitxsan storyteller. We partnered with three Gitxsan Elders to learn about the language of pregnancy, childbirth, and life with a newborn. In agreeing to work with us, the Elders honoured us by sharing some of their knowledge and life experiences with us.

The thesis begins with three chapters that provide background information regarding the Gitxsan language and territory, how I came to be involved in the project, and the traditional seasonal round and laws related to women in transitional periods. The thesis then details the research process that emerged from the project. The following two chapters include information that has not been previously documented. Chapter 5 presents language related to pregnancy, birth, and life with a newborn and corresponding linguistic analysis with suggestions for how someone without a background in linguistics could use the information presented in the chapter. Chapter 6 presents a local history focused on the confluence between Gitxsan and Eurocanadian health and medical care, with a focus on obstetric care from Gitxsan perspectives.

The thesis concludes with a reflection on what working from within a Gitxsan research methodology means for a project that focuses on the sensitive and personal topic of pregnancy, childbirth, and life with a newborn. Traditionally, Gitxsan are researchers (M. J. Smith, 2004), so it is my hope that the *Limxhl Hlgu Wo'omhlxw* project has made a contribution to Gitxsan epistemological knowledge.