



University  
of Victoria

Graduate Studies

Notice of the Final Oral Examination  
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

of

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**“From Xwelítem Ways Towards Practices of Ethical Being in Stó:lō  
Téméxw: A Narrative Approach to Transforming Intergenerational  
White Settler Subjectivities”**

Indigenous Governance Program

Friday, November 24, 2017  
10:00 a.m.

Human and Social Development Building  
Room A260

Supervisory Committee:

Dr. Taiaiake Alfred, Indigenous Governance Program, University of Victoria (Supervisor)  
Dr. Jeff Corntassel, Indigenous Governance Program, UVic (Member)  
Dr. James Tully, Department of Political Science, UVic (Outside Member)  
Dr. Wenona Hall, Indigenous Studies, University of the Fraser Valley (Additional Member)

External Examiner:

Dr. Jeannie Kerr, Faculty of Education, University of Winnipeg

Chair of Oral Examination:

Prof. Andrew Newcombe, Faculty of Law, UVic

Dr. David Capson, Dean, Faculty of Graduate Studies

## Abstract

What must we transform in ourselves as white settlers to become open to the possibility of ethical, respectful, authentic relationships with Indigenous peoples and with Indigenous homelands? Situating this research in Stó:lō lands and in relationships with Stó:lō people, this question has become an effort to understand what it means to be *xwelítem* and how white settlers might transform *xwelítem* ways of being towards more ethical ways of being. *Xwelítem* is a Halq'eméylem concept used by Stó:lō people which literally translates as the hungry, starving or greedy ones, and is often used to refer to ways of being many Stó:lō associate with white settler colonial society, past and present. Drawing on insights and wisdom of Stó:lō and settler mentors I consider three aspects of *xwelítem* ways of being. First, to be *xwelítem* is to erase Stó:lō presence, culture and nationhood, colonial history and contemporary colonial realities of Indigenous oppression and dispossession, and settler privilege. Second, being *xwelítem* means attempting to dominate, control, and repress those who are painted as “inferior” in dominant cultural narratives, it means plugging into racist colonial narratives and stereotypes. Third, being *xwelítem* is to be hungry and greedy, driven by consumption and lacking respect, reverence and reciprocity for the land. Guided by Indigenous and decolonizing methodologies, critical place inquiry, narrative therapy, and autoethnography, I shape three narratives that speak to each aspect of being *xwelítem*, looking back towards its roots and forward towards pathways of transformation. I draw on interviews and experiences with Stó:lō and settler mentors, personal narratives, family history, and literature from critical Indigenous studies, anti-colonial theory, settler colonial studies, analytic psychology, and critical race theory.

I aim to share what I have learned *from* rather than *about* Stó:lō culture, stories, teachings, and practices as these have been shared in relationships and as they have pushed me towards seeing anew myself and my family, communities, histories, and cultures. I have also walked this path as I have become a mom, and the co-alignment of these journeys has meant a focus on my role as a parent in recognizing and intervening with becoming/being *xwelítem* as it influences my daughter. I specifically center the space of intergenerational parent-child relationships and intimate family experiences as a deep influence on developing white settler subjectivities, and therefore also a relational space of profound transformative potential. I end with a call for settlers to offer our gifts towards the wellbeing of the land and Indigenous peoples through cycles of reciprocity as a basis for ethical relationships. Transforming white settler subjectivities is situated within the broader vision of participating in co-resistance, reparations and restitution, of bringing about justice and harmony, which inherently involves supporting the self-determination and resurgence of Indigenous peoples.