



Central Vancouver Island
Multicultural Society



Snuneymuxw,

a Welcome to Newcomers

William A. White, Snuneymuxw / Coast Salish



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Cover photo by William A. White

The cover page photo was selected as it shows a young child Peter with his Uncle John paying attention to his surroundings. It is a visible reminder of one of our significant teachings that our children are sacred and should be treated with the utmost of respect. His grandmother, Kay George, Q'Puthet Unwinus Co-Ordinator speaking to John Barsby students with Q'Puthet Unwinus Elders at the bighouse about 'not being stubborn'. As his grandmother, like all of our grandmothers, every time she saw him she hugged, kissed him and told him how much he was loved.

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We are related to all living things



Centre Two humans, one male/black one female/red rise to greet the morning sun, yellow outside of circle. The green represents our environment and the blue our skies. The round dots, our mother Kay George, reminds us that these represent the songs for strength and protection. These dots are also found on our classic house posts. Immediately surrounding the figures are one male, black, and one female, red thunderbirds answering the prayer to protect and to surround. The artist Rita George-Greene captures our relationships to all living things, the sky, the land, our old peoples teachings about songs, the strength of both the male and females. Our old people told us to remember these things every moment, to apply daily and to remember to pass these things along to our children. Rita George-Greene, BFA 95

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William A. White's Speech

It is very exciting to be with all of you at this moment.

I am the child of Willie and Kay White, the grandson of George and Isobel White on my father's side, On my mother's side, the grandson of Adam Jimmy and Martha O'Shane Joseph.

In 1974 Chief Dan George, My Heart Soars wrote, "***The earth is holy, the feet that walk on it are blessed.***"

Later he wrote, "***..we must write about our ways, our beliefs, our customs, our morals, , how we look at things and why...***" (1974:55)

These are some of the things you will find in this booklet.

The Snuneymuxw like our cultural, ritual, social neighbors from South Western BC and NW Washington State come from a living culture where during the ceremonial season at least a 1000 people gather to celebrate our relations with all living things.

Our ancestors have been here for at least 8,000 years and their teachings, songs, stories, reminded us we are related to all living things and that we should treat each other well and treat each other with the utmost of respect.

That relationship with all living things is reflected in our ritual and ceremonial institutions which went underground during the oppression of both church and state during the outlawing of our ceremonial institutions during what was called the Potlatch Law, 1884 – 1950. The first newcomers, Europeans, to arrive to our homelands to settle was around 1849. They immediately began to remake, rename our world, take resources, and inhabit areas in and around our village sites, as if it was theirs and theirs alone. It was not. Chief Dan George referred to this period of great darkness "As Our Sad Winter."

I am a descendant of the hereditary Chief called Tsuknustan whose main village site was called Skwacuma and we stand on the site of that village.

One of our elders Emily Manson identified another village site that held a wooly dog whose wool was used by noble women to weave protective blankets called Swukwulth. That village was called, sqwal'iqmi'/smalldog.



Bill White, Snuneymuxw First Nation knowledge keeper and Author, at the book launch event on Thursday, May 25. White is joined by Jennifer Wang, left, and Jansait Qughondouqa of the Central Vancouver Island Multicultural Society. (Photo by Nanaimo Museum)

As for the importance of this day and your new publication. My grandfather George White would have said, “for gosh sakes.”

One of the elders/sulalewh we recorded in the seventies, Anderson Tommy, told us that his elders/Sulsalewh from Stliilinu/Departure Bay told him as a child when teaching him songs said to him, “you will hear these songs echo long after we are gone.”

Of our relationship to the land and its resources another significant elder/sulalewh Dr. Samuel Sam, OC told a story about the creation of the first wom-an from a cedar tree from the Goldstream Area.

Another story talks about a young man who ventured out on his own, which he was not to do, and went close to the sea/beach. There he was captured by a salmon taken to the their homeland. He became a salmon and returned four years later to visit his relatives. Our Ancestors carved our relationship to salmon in Petroglyphs and recently another relative Mr. Willie Pierre, from Katzie sang a song which brings salmon to our homelands to harvest. By doing this he demonstrated our continued relations with the natural and supernatural worlds.

Through this story children are taught about our relationship to the salmon people.

The eminent Hereditary Chief Adam Dick, another one of my teachers, not long ago, stood on the bow of a boat sang a song which called killer whales to come close, they did. He also had a mask complex with masks represented all living things demonstrating our relationship to the animals, birds, the forest. Through this complex the sacred moved, the sacred had songs to drive our connectedness to all living things.

Our mother Kay George told us a story about a ritual/ceremonial song which sounded like a choo choo train! This was before the arrival of the xwulanitum to our homelands.

She also told us about a metal snake with smoke that came out of its head as it moved through the mountains.

For us there was no wilderness. Forests, streams, mountains represented places where songs, stories were held – with silence, focus and being clean provided the necessary magic to access these worlds.

This was the great gifts associated with our teachings called Snawayalth, revealing balance, order all of which accessed through prayers, songs, and teachings. Our old people believed we had to demonstrate every moment, every day of our lives.

William A. White
May 25th, 2023



Bill White, Snuneymuxw First Nation knowledge keeper and Author, joined by Randy Fred, a member of the Tseshaht First Nation (left), and members of CBC and Nanaimo News Bulletin.

Introductory Comments

Seven years following my - Kevin's - arrival in Nanaimo, the words of friends up island, describing the Coast Salish, of which the Snuneymuxw are, as the most conservative First Nation on Vancouver Island, revisit me. This conservatism had me baffled and blinded when I arrived. What I missed, and what was invisible at first, was the brilliance of the ancestors, and the steady, living culture. This text offers a better process for newcomers - it offers a bridge of understanding. This book provides an echo of the old people, and collectively offer this work towards your balance and wellness on this land.

Canada is presently looking for its light as widespread condemnation and news stories surface horrors from our recent past. Well documented are the atrocities, assimilative policies, residential schools and systemic racism which have left disrepair in relationships across our nation. This is our living, and ongoing shared history. Our truth. And yet, to most readers, the swirling and threatening nature of this truth likely causes folks to "other" - to claim one side or another of this history, "colonizer" or "colonized". This is false identification. We are all standing on the same land. This is our history. We must all move beyond the "Dark Winter" of colonialism.

It is no longer controversial to identify that Canada lacks a unified "us" - the time for unity and transformative benevolence is needed by society more than ever. It is my conviction that the cultural messenger for a healthy path forward on this land is xe' xe' Snuneymuxw- the ways, knowledge and teachings. As you begin imagining yourself within Canada, you are also invited into the honest reconciliation efforts taking place across Canada. This honest path will form the basis for our brighter, shared future.

In 2015, as a newcomer myself, Bill introduced himself to me. Since our paths crossed, William A. White, has gifted me with a tutelage of patience, generosity, and of greatest honour, sacred teachings to bring forward for this new day - "Sinyews" which frame a bright future for Canada and the sacred Coast Salish lands of mid-Vancouver Island.

My role as hwunitum/ European Ancestry and learner, has been to listen, much like the childhood phase explained later. The written text being held in your hands reflects our best and first efforts to bridge and frame essential teachings of Snuneymuxw, for your use and application. This work models "walking together" and a hopeful future.

This text is also an invitation to follow the lived footsteps that have gone ahead of us; steps that have had enduring success on this land. For thousands of years, indeed since Time Immemorial on this territory, Snuneymuxw have carried on with a tradition of nobility and wellness. Nanaimo, yes Snuneymuxw, is the living record of the Snuneymuxwen story; an inclusive story that is being framed, shared carefully in written form, as best we can muster for this diverse audience. Historically, teachings would be shared orally, repeated over time, when ready.

With tremendous humility, I contribute to this with titumels/Teacher, sulalewh/Elder, William White, knowing full well that his teachings are guided from a lineage of health and abundance. With my partner who has worked with elders since the 1970's, through struggle and resurgence, I entered our relationship as friend and colleague, carrying 15 years experience as a public-school educator. In my career I have been seeking to know and serve cross-cultural communities wherever I've been stationed. I can imagine no greater privilege than collaborating with Bill and our community in this work. I stand now, solidly, with Snuneymuxw's shared vision for community and wellness.

Whether your arrival in Canada has been for "push" or "pull" reasons, know this: the land, Snuneymuxw, welcomes you. You are invited into transformation, if you will listen.

You may rush through this booklet quickly; that would be a mistake. However, if time is an issue, we have sought to put brief windows - quotes, headings and images - so that even a cursory glance might provide insight. Given the importance of these teachings for this land, for your new life here, it is a better path to hold this text close as you acclimate to the Pacific Northwest. Know you belong.

On behalf of the author, Welcome! We start with a story...



Ken George looks through the longhouse at another time when his grandmother Kay George, Q'Puthet Unwinus Elders Co-Ordinator stand with Snuneymuxw Sulsalewh opening Swylana Park, Nanaimo Harbor c. 70's W. White photo

We start with a story



“After the rain the grass will shed its moisture, the fog will lift from the trees, a new light will brighten the day....” D. George, 1974: 15; William White, Coast Salish (Snuneymuxw/Cowichan) BA History. Artwork Rita George - Greene Thunderbird responds to prayers to remove killer whale from the Tribe’s food source

After four days of travel and after a full year we are back at this very special spot in the Rocky Mountains. We begin our trek up the mountain. It is first thing in the morning, and we have walked for several hours; we knew we were only halfway up the mountain. We stopped at this small treed grove where you can see the majesty of the mountains and clouds for miles and miles. We are all alone, it is quiet. There is no one else around, no traffic and no tourists.

All of the old people - “sulsulewh” or “elders” - we worked with since the 1970s, always spoke about the importance of prayers to the Creator and the Ancestors, for guidance and strength. This paper is to echo, if you will, the old peoples’ teachings about where we might find silence, connection and the sacred.

Putting traditional/sacred poems and stories into written text comes with obvious challenges; please approach them simply, trying to reflect on the various components of our old peoples prayers. For example, how did they begin? What did they ask for? Who did they mention? What does that mean in terms of our lives, our relationships?

To help with that reflection process, our text includes a number of prayers which have been written during work with the sulsulewh/elders. You’re invited into exploring their process, perhaps learning from how ritual might work in this way, and embracing these traditions; they have been known to be sacred. Prayers after this introduction speak of our peoples’ relationships with the natural and supernatural world.

“Know Where You Come From...

**when darkness visits, use the teachings of the *Old People/*
Sul’eluhwst.”**



William A. White, BA History & Anthropology Uvic, 1991 September 2014



The winds blow, make your minds strong

William A White, Coast Salish/Snuneymuxw, 2015

1. Today, as with all mornings, I stand out on deck and feel the gentle winds
blow through my body
that wind too removes those things that no longer belong in my heart and soul
Today, I stand and face the sun with my love and with coffee in hand
to look over all who have gathered
I am as always surrounded by great friends, those who too love being here
and soon I will begin my routine, to visit, to talk and to know the JOY of belonging
2. I know that I belong here, I have always belonged here
And as I stand here, I know the Joy of Belonging, Of healing
and feel the energy, the gifts of those who were here before me
Deep in my heart and soul I have always known these things
3. Today, as with all mornings the Creator sent a gentle washing rain
that reminds me of yesterday, of loves, of joy and of belonging
and with that Great Great Joy that I hold in my heart and soul
and on this morning, as with all mornings
I know the blessing, the love, that sense of belonging
with the fresh morning rain and the gentle winds
4. And I stand stronger, and I love more, and I know JOY even more
With great blessings, with great humility and thanks for those who passed before
With great blessings, with great humility for the gifts of belonging, of talk,
of the love of many and the Creator said
"Behold for today is a new day, and I am grateful!"
"Behold for today is a new day, and I am grateful!"
"Behold for today is a new day, and I am grateful!"
"Behold for today is a new day, and I am grateful!"



Behold, said the creator... for today is a new day

William A. White, Coast Salish/Snuneymuxw

With each new day as the sun breaks through the dark of nite
I release those things that do not belong, and I make room for
joy and great love, and know that I belong.
There is joy in the world today

I release those things that do not belong, and I make room for joy
and great love, and know that I belong.
There is joy in the world today

With each new day as the gentle winds move through the trees, I know the
joy of your presence...and I am grateful, I am loving, I am joyful
and I know that I have never walked alone and I know great joy and love
and I know that I have never been alone no longer need to search
and as I move my heart sings, as I move my soul dances and moves across
the earth and I know the joy of belonging
and as I move my heart sings, as I move my soul dances and moves across
the earth and I know the joy of belonging

Behold said, the Creator ...for today is a new day!

Listen very carefully

Back to the Rocky Mountains.

It is so quiet, you can hear your own thoughts! The old people spoke about the importance of solitude and of our teachings.... you slowly begin to re- member their words.

Spoken to yourself, you might say in humble acknowledgement, “my father, my grandfather, his father and many uncles have been to places like this!” This place is as old as time itself. You stop and find a comfortable spot. This is one of those moments when you do not feel alone and know we have been here before.

As we sit quietly, in the distance, coming closer and closer is at first a gentle whoosh, whoosh....it becomes louder and louder. You were told when this happens it is important to continue to sit quietly. The sound becomes louder and you can feel shivers up and down your spine. You continue to keep still. The old people spoke about being silent, keeping still and listening. Both of us are quiet.....and it seemed very important to recall ‘talk’ from the Old people/Sulsaluhw especially if something ‘sacred’ was about to happen. This seemed like one of those times!

Our children grow up, immersed in teachings so that we are attuned to the sacred. By way of example, during an interview by grade 12 student Fred Seymour, Cowichan elder Mary Wilson spoke of her life, sharing, “I was told to be kind to everyone and say prayers every day”(Xe’Xe’).



The whoosh becomes louder and louder. It flies over and finally reveals itself: it was a large bird, perhaps an eagle. And it WAS large! Wings seemed longer than we were tall. The biggest that we have ever seen! The sky, these mountains were his. He has seen the likes of us before.

He looked back briefly.

Willie White Son of George and Isobel White

(nee Wyse) and father of Bill White.

photo Kay White c. early 50's

Belonging and knowing

In 1974 Chief Dan George, like many of the sulseluwh who spoke to their children and grandchildren reinforced belonging and knowing, in essence laying down teachings which reminded them, there are real strengths within our world. Our grandparents endured much more 'darkness' (racism and discrimination, forced poverty) than we ever will. The Sinyews/teachings left to them from their parents and grandparents were applied every day, often beginning with a prayer calling for strength. Prayers were also for protection, for guidance, and healing for their children and grandchildren, brothers, sisters, aunts, uncles etc.

Great Creator with great humility we saw the cleansing power, of cedar branches, the joy of knowing our songs came from the mountains, streams provided a solitude that fed into our hearts and souls -and we knew we belonged.



Left: Chief Joseph, Lummi Type, Edward S. Curtis. Northwestern University Library, Edward S. Curtis's 'The North American Indian': the Photographic Images, 2001. right: W.A. Newcombe, 1910. Blanket being thrown to guests at Quamichan longhouse, Cowichan (Duncan, BC). Sadly Newcombe did not name the hosts for the potlatch. RBCMphoto

Of these teachings Dan George spoke with clarity and foretold, "For some time bewilderment will, like an ugly spirit torment you. Then rest on the holy earth and wait for the good spirit. He will return with new ways as his gift to you, if you let it happen" (18).

In the mid-seventies we recorded a number of songs from the sulseluwh, from our own reserve, while working with Q'Puthet Unwinus -Centre for Coming Together. One of those songs was called a "Prayer Song." A number of singers from Snuneymuxw have begun to sing that song! It was so exciting to hear those songs after forty or so years! In this way, the singers have begun the process left to us by our old people, of celebrating each other and our relationships with the natural and supernatural world.

Words have power; they must be used with care

When teaching us songs, Sulalewh Anderson Tommy recalled being taught songs as a child sitting on the beach at Stil'il'ip/Departure Bay. The old people told him, "you will hear this song echo, long after we are gone!" When he shared about that he was visibly moved, as those words came back for the first time after many years. This is one of the reasons that the old people understood, words have power; they must be used with care. Anderson Tommy had the words come back, after 50 or so years! They contained as much meaning for him as when first spoken long before. His sharing was the first time I saw a Sulalweh emotionally react to a story from his childhood.

Of singing... the drums begin slowly, methodically and then the lead singer begins... soon the others will follow. Dan George said, "Faster the drum sounds as the spirits move closer...and we dance." (46). Often our songs are as old as time itself.

Photos of the Sulselewh gathered for a visit by Princess Royal students, depict how they reinforced with their stories about where songs came from, about our relationships with the natural and supernatural worlds.

Our sleni/women gave demonstrations of the prayers and weaving of wool; that and all of these things shed light on Dan Georges' phrase "the earth is holy, the feet that walk on it are blessed" (52).

Uvic is a major western institution a place where individualism is strengthened. In contrast, Dr. Samuel Sam, OC, far right, identifies an Ancestral village called Thuleescha on that site. Given that as Aboriginal Liaison Officer, he was invited to bring prayers, songs and advice to honour our ancestors. photo Aboriginal Liaison Office, Uvic Photo Services.



“Off to the grocery store”

This story was originally written by William A. White and Andrew Cienki

The wind is blowing: **stsus** a strong and dangerous wind from the Northeast or Southeast. The cold waves spray into their faces as this family strains to make it across the strait. The men pull with all their strength. **Ni' kw'amkw'um t'ewluw's**, their arms are strong, and their hands hard after years of canoeing these waters. The rest of the family bail the water that threatens to sink the canoe, **snuxwulh**. **Suli'si'**, they are afraid, but they don't panic. They have faced all kinds of weather together. And they've made it through by relying on one another.

Siie'yū, families from Nanoose to Saanich traveled regularly to their camps along the Gulf Islands and along the Fraser River to pick berries, **lhuntst**; fish for salmon, **tseel-htun**; and to visit friends and family, **siie'yū**. And then **Nem' yuhun'umuts**, they went back home.



“We were bailing out as hard as we could.” Crosby, Thomas. 1907

Around 1827 about 1500 people from Cowichan and Chemainus settled on Lulu Island to gather food supplies. They did this every year as part of their seasonal rounds. Trips to gather food, **s'ulhtun**, for the winter or to visit **siie'yū** could be many days long **kwin skweyul**.

The whole family had to work together, **hikwut**, in order to travel safely. Some had to pull, or paddle the canoe, **'ushulh 'u tthu snuhwulh**. Others to bail the canoe, **lhulut 'u tthu snuhwulh**. They had to be really organized, in great shape and strong, **kw'amkw'um**.

Dried fish and clams would have been carried for these trips and of course they had at least three cedar bark bailers, **lhixw lhultun**, to ensure water did not rise up too far. It was hard work, **nan 'uw tl'i'tthu syays**. **Siie'yū** who traveled to potlatches up and down the island or along the Fraser River visited, **nets'uw'thwum**; for maybe two maybe three days, **ni' tsexwi yuse'lu (2) ni' tsexwi lhixw (3) skeyul (days)**. At that time, the world was still very much ours and many relatives passed from one place to another. For example, in 1828, five hundred Cowichan Canoes passed by Ft. Langley on their way back to the island! Imagine!

SnuneymuthSyath - LivingHistoryandCultureProject



Select key terms & village names

Term/Name	English Translation
Huychqa	Thank you
Huy ceep qa	Thank you (plural)
Q'Puthet Unwinus	Elders Group formed in 1970s -“CentreforComingTogether”
Saalh Tumuxw	“Our Land”
Siiye'yu	Friends
Sinyews	Teachings
Sleni	Women
Smilhu	Winter Dance
Snuneymuxwen	Hulq'umi'num Dialect/ Way of Being
Snuxwulh	Canoe
Stil'il'ip	Village - Departure Bay
Stl'unuq	Potlatch feast
Sulalewh/Sulselewh	Elder/Elders, Old people
Swukwulh	Nobility blanket
Titumels	Teacher
Uy netulh	Good morning
Uy skweyul	Good day
Xe' xe'	Sacred
Xulsalewh	Elder
Hwunitum	Non-Indigenous

Children are sacred

Children represent the transformed future. Oft heard “our children are our future” is echoed strongly by the old people; stronger still, children’s cherished nature and an expectation of adults’ loving support. Coast Salish Tribal institutions*, buttressed by values and ceremonies, teachings called “sinyews,” provide for children ‘order and stability’; woven throughout this living value is the responsibility of extended family to care for children as needed. The loving “umbrella” - think eaglet underneath a mature eagle’s wingspan - carries children, in their childhood stage.

A child raised in a traditional way, under the guidance of relatives, in accordance with the teachings/values found within the longhouse and the Shaker Church may, by 4 years of age, fully understand the importance of being quiet – and becoming a careful observer while old people are speaking (Amoss). Children will learn important lessons through these processes: the manner in which Sulsulewh/elders speak to their parents and older cousins, and the way older relatives work in unison to help others. Reinforcement is gentle and steady; simultaneously kind and firm.



*William A. White Photo Simon Charlie Exhibit, Uvic
Simon Charlie life size carving of an Eagle about to take flight.*

Children learn that they exist within a family and then a community, they belong and are not alone, and they have an obligation to help.

*You will find very few examples which link values to existing ritual and ceremonial functions which strengthen families, protect children etc. Salish institutions are identified here.

Ceremony, ritual to strengthen

Shaker Church ceremonies, Winter Dance activities, and the observation of parents as they interact with others, all strengthen the sense of being together; this includes moving, eating, singing, being serious and laughing.

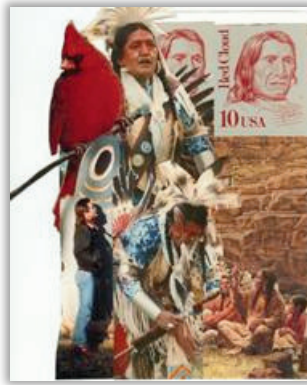


Sul'seluhw Nanaimo Bighouses, 70's W. White photo

Each winter dance season, for example, after the speaker announces the work, families line up usually 50-60 on the floor with bags of quarters, symbolic 'help' for their families who are working that night.

At the Shaker Church, the Minister makes the sign of the cross, announces the Creator and slowly begins a song provided to him or her by the Creator. This action begins the process of celebrating 'being' and perhaps protection, but more importantly, to reinforce being humble in the presence of those greater than us.

There is no other Tribal group in the province that has two powerful working institutions such as these- the Shaker Church and the Winter Dance Complex. Yet, within each of our regions, you will find similarities: rites, ceremonies that celebrate living, relationships with all living things and traditions to create stronger communities.



With focus, with balance we move across the earth and know joy

William A. White, Coast Salish/Snuneymuxw, June 22, 2016

1. Behold said the Creator for today is a New Day, and I am grateful
Behold said the Creator the Ancestors carried, songs, teachings, prayers and I am
grateful. And I stand before you humbled, appreciative and know great JOY.

2. I remember the flight of the great thunderbird and his little brother Kulus. I have
been to their home where gentle talk and brotherhood prepared us to take flight.
Later flight took place and darkness removed! We saw four of them!

We are grateful for the love, for the protection and the JOY of your presence.

We shed that which no longer belongs. We move stronger
We shed that which no longer belongs. We move stronger
We were protected, we were blessed and quietly knew JOY.
We were protected, we were blessed and quietly knew JOY.

3. With these your actions I am reminded of the gifts of change and of the beauty
which flows. Reminded that life is sacred, that talk and love is sacred.

Great Creator - your voice, the Ancestors teachings also remind me to shed that
which no longer belongs – for these reasons flight is stronger, it is lasting and we
are grateful. To do so, over time again and again the old people knew, provided
essential healing. We are able to move quietly but with purpose!

4. As a gentle wind begins each morning I also know to continue to express JOY and
to continue to release those things which no longer belong.

And I know Dear Ones that each day we are tested and reminded to shed those
things that block your voices, your teachings and my love for all things Sacred.

Art is the sacred made visible

Art for sale and mass production is basically a western concept, that is, art produced for art's sake (Kew, 4); in contrast, Coast Salish artists work to make the sacred visible. Coast Salish art - initially houseposts, spindle whorls, rattles, fishing equipment, box drums- produced by men were meant to bring together teachings associated with Creation. Understandings were made visible, particularly regarding the inter-relationships of human beings and the natural/supernatural worlds.

The base of many Coast Salish images is the spindle whorl, a device used by women for spooling wool. Historically, these were carved by men for women and often contained images of a supernatural helper such as birds, animals, etc. in which he focused his prayers, thoughts, teachings while working with the wood. When finished the man in turn gave it to a noble woman responsible for the weaving of wool blankets, called swukwulh – nobility blankets.



When weaving, a woman did this in seclusion for a month and was celibate. As a reflection of the 'living culture' of our people, the Snuneymuxw maintain rules and regulations requiring celibacy today. In short the swukwulh was meant to protect, surround the wearer with ancient songs, words of power. The finished product, a nobility blanket, carried the energy, teachings and protection of both men and women



Ritual Symbolism

The swukwulh - woven nobility blanket - is thought to be at least 6000-8000 years old. Our culture is a 'living culture; as such, the instruments of power used for ceremonial rites to protect and surround, require the family to be respectful of all living things. The old people taught their community that patterns of power, of strength and protection required focus, humility, responsibility and repetition.

In 1953, for her dissertation on the Coast Salish, Barbara Lane studied ritual and ceremony throughout the region; Lane found patterns, often-repeated (i.e., prayers, songs, talk, dances) in cycles of four or pairs. She described this pattern as occurring with "monotonous regularity".

This pattern of fours or pairs is often found on spindle whorls carved by men for women, often depicting pairs of birds, animals surrounding one person.



Barbara Lanes' informants believed that repetition ensured bringing in the sacred, in order to protect and to surround, thus making the sacred visible - and also as a learning tool for the young.

The symbolism, the spoken work, the words of a song, even songs without words, were meant to build and to enhance; this ritual and ceremony worked within the individual and from them to the natural and supernatural worlds.





“Stl’iil’up Families Prepare to Host”

The year is 1880. The village of Stl’iil’up is located in what is now called Departure Bay. It was the main village site and home for many Snuneymuxw people. The village was so large that it contained three rows of longhouses, or the:wtxw (some people use the term thi lelum̓). At a bluff near Wellington the first man appeared out of a hole. His name was Slhumuxw (Rain). He was the one who set up the village of Stl’iil’up.

It is early morning. After the harvest season, Snuneymuxw ritual, social, and ancestral obligations begin. These obligations often come in the form of a stl’uñuq (potlatch feast), or smilhu (a winter dance). Si’em̓, the heads of families, organize their families to save blankets and goods for at least three years to prepare for hosting stl’uñuq and smilhu. The goods will be given away to the guests.

Gifting is very important in all the nations living along the coast. Soon more visitors will arrive by canoe. When the imushnetun arrive and the time is right, the hosts will throw the swuq̓walh down as smeñt. Swuq̓walh are extremely valuable. Not so long ago, the people from here used to trade with mainland people for mountain goat wool. They used that wool to make blankets which was the currency for si’em̓ families.

Snuneymuxw families harvested clams from the taxw (beach) near Stl'il'up and Newcastle Island as they thaythut (prepared themselves) to ulhtunustuxws kwthu imushne'tuns (feed their guests).

Apparently syeḡe from Nanoose to Quw'utsuḡ visited with their Snuneymuxw syeḡe in February and March to gather herring roe. This area was also a source for butter and littleneck clams. From March through August of each year syeḡe harvested sca'tḡ (halibut), èyt (cod), èsḡw (seal), and shes (sea lion) from Sqe'qthuq, the name of the fishing ground near Dodd's Narrows.

While 1880 seems like a very long time ago, the traditions continue, and are even growing in strength. Snuneymuxw syeḡe continue to celebrate stl'uḡuq and smilhu on special occasions such as weddings and memorials, passing on ancestral names and ownership of masks, rattles, and so on. To do this, the syeḡe save hulixwtun i sulhtun (blankets and food) in order to host mulstimuxw from throughout the islands and the lower mainland.

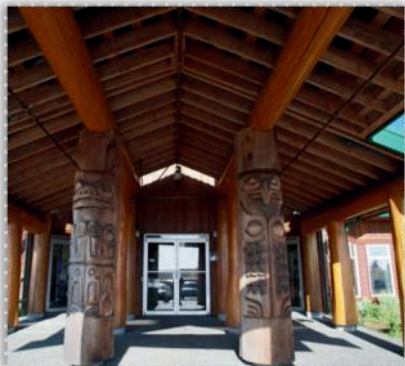
Sinyews and syuḡeḡ hold the values of working together, helping one another, listening carefully, having a deep respect for the sul'eluxw, etc.. These are passed along to the next generation when theyoung spend time with the old, c'exwul' 'al'mucuḡ 'i' xwiyuḡeḡ— sitting quietly and listening.



Qwam Qwum Stuwixwulh - The Snuneymuxw Hul'qumi'num Immersion School, exists as a modern example of applying Sinyews/Teachings for a new day

Economic resurgence

Snuneymuxw First Nation as a political and economic agent currently thrives within very complex landscape and historical agreements. To offer a simplified overview of the unique relationship between First Nations and Canada, it was recently described in The Canadian Department of Justice's Principles: Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (Canada. Department of Justice, 1):



"Indigenous peoples have a special constitutional relationship with the Crown. This relationship, including existing Aboriginal and treaty rights, is recognized and affirmed in section 35 of the Constitution Act, 1982. Section 35 contains a full box of rights, and holds the promise that Indigenous nations will become partners in Confederation on the basis of a fair and just reconciliation between Indigenous peoples and the Crown."

The Government recognizes that Indigenous self-government and laws are critical to Canada's future, and that Indigenous perspectives and rights must be incorporated in all aspects of this relationship. In doing so, we will continue the process of decolonization and hasten the end of its legacy wherever it remains in our laws and policies" (1).

Led by Chief Michael Wyse, today in Nanaimo, Snuneymuxw's Chief and Council are leaders and active participants in numerous projects and collective approaches to economic development, more than any other time in our history.



SFN is committed to working within the historical rights enshrined by the Saarlequum Treaty of 1854. Wherein shared values and understandings exist, collaborative and consultative partnerships thrive.

Snuneymuxw, a Welcome to Newcomers

- a review from Douglas Deur, Ph.D.

“I have had the great honour to work closely with the author of this volume, William White (Xelimulth / Kasalid), who has served as a kind teacher, collaborator and friend to me for many years. Together, we have worked to document, share, and celebrate the teachings of specially trained nobility from the First Nations of this coast, the caretakers of countless generations of traditional teachings – especially those held by our dear friend and mentor, the late Clan Chief Kwaxsistalla Adam Dick of the Kwakwaka’wakw. This is a task of unique weight and importance at this point in British Columbia history: for these are no idle teachings of simple antiquarian interest, but serve as important guideposts still showing us how to navigate the challenges of our present times.

So too, the ancient teachings, the snawayalth, that William White shares in this book are offered as a gift and a blessing to those who have arrived in this place of such beauty, grandeur, sacredness and meaning. Here, the Snuney- muxw people have lived since the beginning of remembered time. Across the generations, the ancestors have nourished an intimate familiarity with every part of this place, the longstanding homeland of the Snuneymuxw. The ancestors observed their world carefully, engaging daily with the natural and super- natural worlds. Their knowledge, their intricate observations, their profound understandings of this place and its potentials were woven into their snawayalth, their teachings – taught to young people of each generation with cautious fidelity to ensure that these things would be transmitted accurately, to meaningfully guide and protect the generations yet to come. The details of how to heal a sick family member with plant medicines; how to adapt during a crash in salmon runs; how to survive well in times of earthquake or fire or flood; how to kindly greet and nurture deserving guests; how to rebalance communities after a time of sustained conflict – these teachings, and a million more, have been woven into the snawayalth still held by Snuneymuxw people today. In hearing these teachings, we are – in a very real sense – still hearing “the words of the ancestors” spoken in our present day. This knowledge remains a wellspring of inspiration and guidance for anyone who would choose to visit, or make a lasting home, in Snuneymuxw traditional lands.

No person should live in such a place while fully disregarding some 99% of the collected human history and the shared experience and wisdom of those who have lived here so long – to disregard the warnings of recurring threats, or disregard the lessons regarding the great bounty and potentials of this land. Those who arrive in present times need access to certain parts of this knowledge simply to live well, and to thrive in this very special place. This volume represents a gift of incalculable value, then, given freely by Snuneymuxw teachers, offering a glimpse into the vast domain of Snuneymuxw traditional teachings. Reading its contents, abiding by these teachings in letter or spirit, we might yet help sustain the wellbeing of this shared place. We might help sustain the continuity of Snuneymuxw cultural knowledge and practice. And we might live better here together, our lives abundant and intertwined, for countless generations yet to come.”

Dr. Douglas Deur / Moxmowisa

Portland State University and University of Victoria



Author Bill White, (Chief Kwaxistalla Adam Dick), and Douglas Deur, preparing to present the Altakimma masked Dance at the P.E. Trudeau Foundation Ethnoecology Symposium, University of Victoria, 2017.

Snuneymuxw, a Welcome to Newcomers, - a review from Peter Twigg, Ph.D.

"This is a beautiful, generous, and powerful document. The power is there in the opening line; Snuneymuxw, a Welcome to Newcomers. The reader is immediately caught by 'Snuneymuxw', a word, a language, a concept that is unknown. Yet the reader is just as quickly disarmed and reassured with the very next word, 'Welcome'. Such a welcome, such an invitation, such an evocation into another world already sets us on a new path, a new way, a new time. We turn the page and enter that new world as a newcomer, welcomed and thus already captivated.

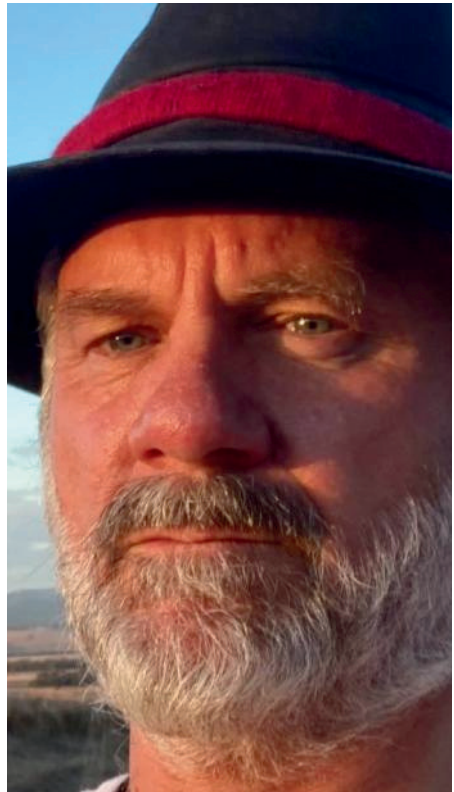
Weaving together stories, lessons, historical events, modern and old names, artworks, protocols, and prayers offers the reader a new way to encounter the rich culture and history of First Nations people. The generosity of what is being offered is that this flowing presentation also provides a respectful way for the newcomer to understand that Dan George's 'Dark Winter' has impacted all and remains within the nations heart. We all have a role to play in bringing forward a new day and this is an invocation to transform and join in the making of that new time. Step forward, the new time will be rich with the wonder, strengths, and understandings of the Land of the Thunderbeing's people who have issued this welcome.

Having had the privilege of travelling and working with Bill in the North West Coast for two years I particularly love the overt framing of 'strengths from old times' for direct application in today's time. This is a powerful, important, and timely message. Alas I suspect that in Canada as in Australia it is rarely encountered. More likely the old ways, cultural practices, modes of learning and living, and ways of seeing each other and the land are identified as part of the problem rather than an essential part of the solution. In often-insidious ways the 'hidden hands of colonialism' continue and enable the pathways for a dark winter. The message spoken in booklet, the actions, lessons and prayers laid out, directly counter such ways of seeing the world and the diminished place of First nations people within. Snuneymuxw turns this refrain around and confidently shows a pathway forward. This principle of bringing the strengths and wisdom and guidance of the old ways into a new time is a powerful message, for First Nations people, and for newcomers. This principle, and Bill's message of accessing strengths will echo across many realms: language, health, community authority, education, and all dimensions where life choices affect life paths.

My sense is that after all that has happened the dark winter indeed recedes. It is now impossible to avoid concluding that historical policies towards First Nations peoples have failed. With concern about environmental degradation and climate change impacts escalating the chance to act differently opens. Calls to reset how we view First Nations people, and the land grows. A determination to face injustices grows too. An openness to trying new ways of doing things blossoms. In such a moment, a determination to 'use our old ways and old strengths to guide and rebuild our lives' becomes a powerful, powerful message.

The use of images, prayers, personal accounts, and quotes from Elders amplifies the message that a living culture has access to great strengths. We now have our turn to make decisions and set new directions for ourselves, our families, our communities, and our countries. This remarkable publication lays down a bridge that spans from Elders across a vibrant cultural people all the way to newcomers and welcomes them to 'step across'. Beautifully done."

Dr. Peter Twigg



Epilogue

Whether your arrival in Canada has been for “push” or “pull” reasons, know this: the land, Snuneymuxw, welcomes you. You are not the most recent arrival to our territories, that process began around 1849. In this regard never let anyone make *you feel less than* with your arrival. Our people, the Snuneymuxw were born here, everyone else arrived late in our history. Europeans arrived to our ancient village sites. Within short order our Ancestors were seen as 'dirty, dark, stupid, lazy, savages etc.' this in order to gain access to our rich resources. lands, forest, seas etc. We became paupers in our own lands. Dan George, 1974, referred to this period as 'our sad winter.'

You are invited into transformation, if you will listen. Even with great historic racism and discrimination our very old traditions echo for a new time and place, in short 'we belong to a living culture.'

The teachings called ***Snawayalth*** or ***Sinyews*** have been in place for at least 8,000 years and speak to maintaining balance and to bring healing when 'darkness' visits. The very first image of the child is my nephew Peter Charlie. He was the first child born after the passing of my dear brother Frank Carl White and thus believed to be the replacement for him. Our traditions and spiritual life, as with all children, require us to protect and to surround and for him to know he is loved. Peter looks intently at what is going on and that has stayed with him into adulthood. He is now an adult with his own children. He looks at his grandmother, our mom, (Kay George), who speaks to young people at one of our longhouses and talks about 'not being stubborn, being clean and being strong.' The old people, our Ancestors left this teaching in place to help with healing after the passing of a significant family member.

You may rush through this booklet quickly; that would be a mistake. However, if time is an issue, we, as my ancestors stood close while working, have sought to put brief windows - quotes, headings and images - so that even a cursory glance might provide insight. Given the importance of these teachings for this land, for your new life here, it is a better path to hold this text close as you acclimate to the Pacific Northwest. I have worked with traditional elders/Sulsalewh since the 1970's and it was their expectation to apply their teachings whether through prayers, songs, advice, or talk to live our values and traditions every day. In 1974 Chief Dan George said "we must write about our ways and why we do things." One of my last teachers of at least 30 years the eminent (Chief Adam Dick/Kwaksistalla) after he spoke about his masks and songs in his formal language turned to me and said, "fix it up". I hope this document does just that. Withloveandblessings,BillWhite/XelimulthandKasalid.

Thank you/ Acknowledgement

The author wishes to acknowledge the old people who have laid down the path for us to follow, "If you will listen."

It was good that CVIMS approached Chief Michael Wyse, The Snuneymuxw First Nation; so that the creators of this project would come together in a good way to prepare newcomers.

May you be strong. May you be blessed.

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About the Author



Bill White speaking for (Chief Adam Dick) Uvic First Peoples House as he prepares to bring out his mask complex Atla'gimma, Creatures of the Forest. (Chief Adam Dick) always told his drummers that "we should not walk over the people who own this land."

Bill White/Xelimulth and Kasalid

*Child of Willie and Kay White (nee Jimmy), Snuneymuxw
Grandson of George and Isobel White (nee Wyse) Snuneymuxw
Grandson of Adam Jimmy and Martha Oshane Joseph, Cowichan
Student of*

Hereditary Chief (Dr. Samuel Sam, OC), Tsartlip, 80's

Hereditary Chief (Adam Dick) Kingcome Inlet and Qualicum Beach, 80's,
90's, 2000

Former

Co-Ordinator of Indian Education, S.D. 68 Nanaimo, 70's

Elected member of the Snuneymuxw Chief and Council, 70's

Lead Councillor for the Snuneymuxw Elders' Project, Q'Puthet Unwinus,
70's

Aboriginal Liaison Officer, University of Victoria, 90's

Cross-Cultural Trainer with Dr. Philip Cook, International Institute for
Children's Rights, UVic. For the South African Governments' Inter-
Ministerial Committee for Children at Risk. 90's

Elder in Residence Tsowtun Lelum, Drug and Alcohol Centre, Nanoose, BC.
90's

Member of Tsowtun Lelum, Indian Residential School Survivors Cultural
Support Team, 90's

Formercont.

Elder in Residence Cowichan Tribes HIV/AIDS project 90's

Coast Salish Advisor, Dr. Nathan Lachowsky, Research Director, Community Based Research Centre, and UVic

Coast Salish Advisor to Jody Jollimore, Community-Based Research Centre, Vancouver, BC

Traditional Snuneymuxw Advisor to Principal Kevin Brand, Snuneymuxw Tribal School, 2017+

Currently

Member of Chief Mike Wyse's Elders Advisory Committee, Snuneymuxw

Titumels/Teacher (Advisor), Nanaimo Museum

Titumels/ Teacher (Advisor) for St. Michaels' University School, Victoria,

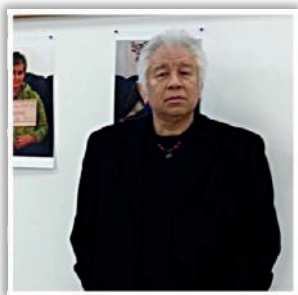
BC.

Traditional Advisor for Kwumet Lelum, Tribal Children's Agency

Note: In the 60's and 70's our traditionally trained elders/Sulsalewh rose at community and family meetings and repeatedly told us to use the best of both worlds. On One hand our teachings, called Snawayalth and on the other those of the xwulanitum/white people. They expected us to use the teachings every day, every moment of our lives, especially during periods of darkness and sorrow and yes to celebrate life!

In the fifties my grandmother Isobel White, made me promise not to drink alcohol. I have kept that promise.

This after her sons' death, my father, who went to work for his brother after he was too hung over to go to work that day - logging. He was killed in a logging accident in 1953. Our mother Kay, then White, raised her two sons, Willie and Frank on her own. She was a traditional Xwulmuxw/Indian from Cowichan. To protect her children from following their father a traditional Coast Salish specialist was brought in to remove our dad's memory from both his children. As a result I only have one or two memories of my dad, Willie.



*Bill White/Xelimulth and Kasalid
Getting ready to speak to a community*

The winds blow, make your minds strong

A Coast Salish Prayer

William A. White, Coast Salish/Snuneymuxw

1. Creator, we thank you for this day
Ancestors we thank you for walking before us
Ancestors we thank you for walking behind us
Make your minds strong!
Behold it is a time of change!
Behold it is a time of transformation!
2. It is the old people who have saved the teachings from ages past
It is the old people who have saved the songs of our ancestors, of the Creator
It is the words of the Creator, of the ancestors brought forward
for a new time and a new place
3. With great humility we thank you for these gifts
Change for self, Change for the community
has been foretold and will like the wind be persistent.
Change and transformation is powerful and can be frightening
Make your Minds Strong!
4. The Creator has provided songs for such things
The Creator has provided dances for such things
The Creator has provided words for such things
The old people, the ancestors knew of the times of change
and the wind blows,
and the teachings and the songs flow
and the winds blow,
hear the wind, hear the songs
Behold it is a time of change!
Behold it is a time of transformation!

“...Those who arrive in present times need access to certain parts of this knowledge simply to live well, and to thrive in this very special place. This volume represents a gift of incalculable value, then, given freely by Snuneymuxw teachers, offering a glimpse into the vast domain of Snuneymuxw traditional teachings. Reading its contents, abiding by these teachings in letter or spirit, we might yet help sustain the wellbeing of this shared place. We might help sustain the continuity of Snuneymuxw cultural knowledge and practice. And we might live better here together, our lives abundant and intertwined, for countless generations yet to come.”

- Dr. Douglas Deur / Moxmowisa
Portland State University and University of Victoria

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William A. White, Snuneymuxw / Coast Salish



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