

# "We can do our own thing here on Haida Gwaii": The Haida Nation's response to COVID-19

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## Résumé de l'article

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# **“We Can Do Our Own Thing Here on Haida Gwaii”: The Haida Nation’s Response to COVID-19**

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# “We Can Do Our Own Thing Here on Haida Gwaii:” The Haida Nations Response to Covid 19

## Abstract

The Council of the Haida Nation (CHN) is the National government of all Haida citizens—and their response to the COVID-19 pandemic on Haida Gwaii—is the central focus of this study. The CHN’s response is contextualized through an analysis of governance structures, consideration of previous epidemics, diseases, and health inequalities. The research questions for this project include: (1) How did the CHN’s role shift during the COVID-19 emergency response on Haida Gwaii; (2) What lessons can be garnered from the CHN’s response to inform future Haida Nation governance? To explore these research questions I conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews with a sample of seven people who were living on Haida Gwaii during the pandemic and had some involvement with the CHN. Following an iterative process of data analysis, four main themes emerged from the data. These themes encompassed the inclusive approach taken by the CHN, the tireless work a small group of people did, and the importance of jurisdiction and self-determination while also considering lessons learned and capacity. The findings demonstrated the importance of continued pushes for self-determination as well as the ability of the CHN to expand its governance role.

## Keywords

Haida, Covid 19, self-determination, self-governance, Haida Gwaii jurisdiction, nationhood

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## **"We Can Do Our Own Thing Here on Haida Gwaii": The Haida Nation's Response to COVID-19**

Indigenous peoples of varied Nations across what is now called Canada were subject to attempted annihilation through introduced disease and further oppressed through colonial policies. Before forceful occupation, "Indigenous peoples lived in independent, sovereign nations governed by complex political and social systems" (Simpson, 2008, p. 13). Epidemics and infectious diseases disproportionately impacted Indigenous peoples as they lacked immunity (First Nations Health Authority, n.d.). The intentional infliction of disease through smallpox infected blankets along with other disease warfare significantly impacted the Haida Nation—who went from an estimated population upwards of 30,000 to about 600 (Collison, 2014; Collison, 2018). This history of disease warfare, genocide, and pandemics is important to contextualize the Haida Nations response to COVID-19 outlined in this paper. Genocide is ongoing (Venne, 2018). Those who survived genocide "went on to face Canada's *Indian Act*, which put them on reserves and governed their day to day lives" along with the compounded impacts of abuse and trauma from "residential schools," the "potlatch ban," and other attacks on culture, Nationhood, and humanity (Collison, 2014, p. 93).

Indigenous peoples have been subject to imposed systems of governance, justice, law, and health. Colonialism supports these imposed systems and encompasses processes of "dispossession, dependence, and oppression" (Manuel, 2017, p. 19). Settler colonial states depend on the perpetuation of oppression to sustain the "dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 7). The continued assertion of self-determination and self-governance despite Canada's imposed dominance is a testament to the strength of Indigenous peoples and cultures. Indigenous peoples continue to revitalize, reimagine, and decolonize their governance systems and Nationhood despite the state's objective of erasure (Venne, 2018; Wakeham, 2021). Decolonization necessitates understanding the ongoing impacts of colonialism on Indigenous peoples while revitalizing Nationbased systems to shed the weight of colonial oppression. The historicization and softening of harm through state rhetoric, public apologies, and reconciliation are concomitant to Canada's colonialism (Palmater, 2017). The Haida Nation is a self-determined Nation that has never ceded title or rights—and whose governance response to the coronavirus-19 (COVID-19) pandemic is central to the research outlined below.

Historical pandemics and infectious diseases nearly decimated the Haida population with intergenerational impacts. The COVID-19 pandemic "remind[s] us of the devastation caused by previous epidemics" (CHN, 2021c, para. 1), and the risk of the COVID-19 pandemic "has been especially acute to nations healing from these histories of genocide" (CHN, 2021d, para. 1). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, on March 23, 2020, the Haida Nation declared "the Haida Gwaii State of Emergency (SOE) ... under Haida authority and the constitution of the Haida Nation. The SOE and emergency protocols were put in place to protect Haida citizens, language, culture, and Island communities" (CHN, 2021d, para. 2). This SOE included provincial and federal governments, health and transportation authorities, and working to ensure the safety of islands residents by regulating entry

to Haida Gwaii. Through a series of semi-structured interviews, I sought to examine the Haida Nation's government, the Council of the Haida Nation (CHN), response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically: (1) How did the CHN's role shift during the COVID-19 pandemic emergency response on Haida Gwaii? (2) What lessons can be garnered from the CHN's response to inform future Haida Nation governance? In the next section, I contextualize the findings through a brief examination of Haida governance, jurisdiction, and disparate health impacts.

### **Haida Gwaii: Governance and Jurisdiction**

Haida Gwaii is a remote archipelago in Northern British Columbia (BC), home to the Haida Nation, and the CHN is the Haida National government representing all Haida citizens (CHN, 2021a, 2021b). The band councils of both "Old Massett Village Council and Skidegate Band Council perform the functions of local government for their respective communities" (Constitution of the Haida Nation, 2018, p. 9) and are designated to do so under the colonially imposed *Indian Act*. The Haida Nation's hereditary systems—including chiefs and matriarchs—are entrenched within the governing body (Constitution of the Haida Nation, 2018). Since its inception, the CHN has worked to become a "National government enacting legislation and policy" while, protecting Haida Gwaii and Haida culture (CHN, 2021b, para. 4).

The CHN is governed by the Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018), which outlines the individual and collective responsibilities of Haida citizens as well as governance structures and legislative bodies. The Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018) under A6.S2 notes that "the [CHN] shall strive for the full independence, sovereignty, and self-sufficiency of the Haida Nation" (p. 4). The Constitution of the Haida Nation is a living document subject to change through amendments at the yearly House of Assembly (HOA), the legislative body of the CHN. The CHN (2021b) has established itself as an Indigenous government capable of negotiating agreements on a Nation-to-Nation basis with the Canadian and Provincial (BC) governments, while also entering into agreements and working collaboratively with other Nations. The Haida Nation has continually asserted self-determination while remaining grounded in hereditary systems including the potlatch system and the interconnected values of witnessing, respect, reciprocity, responsibility, and making things right. These values are exemplified within the Haida proclamation as follows:

The Haida Nation is the rightful heir to Haida Gwaii. Our culture is born of respect; and intimacy with the land and sea and the air around us. Like the forests, the roots of our people are intertwined such that the greatest troubles cannot overcome us. We owe our existence to Haida Gwaii. The living generation accepts the responsibility to ensure that our heritage is passed on to following generations. On these islands our ancestors lived and died and here too, we will make our homes until called away to join them in the great beyond. (Constitution of the Haida Nation, 2018, p. 1).

The Haida Nation has never ceded jurisdiction to Haida Gwaii's lands and waters; however, "the crown issued grants, tenures, licenses, and permits, and collected royalties for lands and resources on Haida Gwaii without Haida approval" (Borrows, 2016, p. 56). The Haida assertion of jurisdiction is present across all agreements with BC and Canada. The Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018) under A3.S1 states that "the Haida Nation collectively holds hereditary and aboriginal title and rights to Haida territories" (p. 2) and outlines the jurisdiction of the Haida Nation over Haida Gwaii.

The Haida Nation has continually maintained Haida jurisdiction by upholding Haida ways of being or laws to protect Haida Gwaii and within colonially imposed courts and systems. The assertion of Haida jurisdiction was evident when the Royal Commission on Indian affairs visited Haida Gwaii in 1913. In his statement to the Commission, Amos Russ asserted "we have never had a fight for these Islands. No nation ever came and fought us for them and won them from us" (as cited in Haida Laas, 2010, p. 18). Thus, jurisdictional disputes are not new – and continue to occur while the state denies Indigenous self-determination.

The CHN filed a Statement of Claim (*Haida Nation v BC and Canada*, 2002) asserting Haida title and rights and officially launching the ongoing title case. Given the strength of the Haida Nations case and the desire to prepare for what Title will look like on Haida Gwaii, the CHN entered into Islands Protocol Agreements with communities on Haida Gwaii—including the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District Electoral Area 'E' (2008); The Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District Electoral Area D (2006); the Municipalities of Port Clements and Masset (2004); and The Village of Queen Charlotte (2006)—(hereafter the Islands Protocol Agreements). These agreements outline steps to be taken to consider the implications of Haida title for all Haida Gwaii residents. These agreements are living documents subject to change as directed by the respective communities. The Islands Protocol Agreements outline the need for local decision-making on issues impacting Haida Gwaii. As a result of the Islands Protocol Agreements, the all-Islands Protocol Table was formed and includes "representatives from the [CHN], Village Councils, municipalities, and regional districts," who collectively work on governance issues pertaining to Haida Gwaii (Fyles, 2020, para. 5). These agreements allow residents of Haida Gwaii to collaborate with Haida citizens and governance on matters of interest to all involved parties, regardless of pending court decisions.

### **Disparate health outcomes and epidemics: situating the COVID-19 Pandemic**

The Haida Nation asserted jurisdiction over Haida Gwaii throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. The Haida Nation's response to COVID-19 warrants contextualization and consideration of disparate health outcomes amongst Indigenous peoples, the remote location of Haida Gwaii, and the traumatic memory of epidemics. As outlined at the outset of this paper, epidemics and infectious diseases have significantly impacted Indigenous communities (Richardson & Crawford, 2020).

Health disparities amongst Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are well documented (United Nations, 2021a), and Indigenous peoples are particularly at risk during pandemics for a myriad of social,

economic, and health reasons (Metcalf & Huskisson-Snider, 2021). This disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic is representative of the “generational effects of settler colonial violence” (Mawani, 2020, p. 2). Power et al. (2020) suggest that “during pandemics, Indigenous Peoples suffer higher infection rates, and more severe symptoms and death than the general population because of the powerful forces of the social and cultural determinants of health and lack of political power” (p. 2737). Further, Indigenous peoples are more likely to live in communities that are “rural and remote” and thus, inadequate access to medical services may compound existing health inequalities and infection rates (Power et al., p. 2738). Many COVID-19 measures necessitate stable “housing, water, food and income security, which are often inadequate in Indigenous communities” (Richardson & Crawford, 2020, p. 1098). The United Nations (2021a) has recognized the importance of “self-determination [and] collective rights” as “crucial to Indigenous health” and closing health disparities (para. 6). Indigenous communities have struggled to uphold their jurisdictions and assert their rights to control territorial borders throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (Fields, 2020; United Nations, 2021b), with many “asserting their own measures” to protect themselves (Power et al., 2020, p. 2739). These intensified measures are likely in response to the history of epidemics, fraught relationships with the colonial state, and accompanied social and health disparities.

Given the remoteness of Haida Gwaii, limited ventilators on island, and concerns over the health of elders and language speakers, Haida Gwaii declared its own SOE rather than waiting for the BC government to do so. From March 2020 forward, the Haida Nation and other Indigenous and civic communities sought support from the provincial and Canadian governments in instituting a travel ban (CHN, 2021d). The CHN (2021d) instituted its own policies and procedures and worked collaboratively with other coastal communities and Nations. The BC government abided by a phased approach to reopening deemed BC’s Restart Plan (BC Government, 2020; Office of the Premier, 2020). Under this four-step phased approach, the province defined essential and non-essential services and procedures that could be put in place for non-essential businesses to continue operations (BC Government, 2020). With each phase, more businesses opened, gatherings were allowed, and safety protocols were instituted accordingly. In Mid-May of 2020, BC moved into Phase 2, and “Haida Gwaii leaders made the decision to move behind BC” by “[easing] emergency measures some three weeks after BC” to ensure safety (CHN, 2021d, para. 13). While Phase 3 saw the reopening of more businesses including those in the “accommodation and tourism sector” (BC Government, 2020; CHN, 2021, para. 15). This was an area of discord between the CHN’s SOE and the provincial guidelines and will be addressed in the findings that follow the methods section below.

## Methods

### **Situating Myself: Insider/outsider status, dual accountability, and establishing trust.**

I am a citizen of the Haida Nation—and at the time of this writing, a resident of Haida Gwaii. Kovach (2009) suggests that “where we are, and the daily influences of our lives, shape how we think and write” (p. 52). Conducting research as a member of a community is fraught with ethical and personal

challenges and a responsibility to do things right (Smith, 2012). Gair (2012) explains "insider/outsider status" as the "degree to which a researcher is located either within or outside a group being researched" (p. 137). Those with insider status may be more able to exhibit empathy based on the "common lived experience," associated with insider status (Gair, 2012, p. 138). Inside knowledge of what it was like on Haida Gwaii during the COVID-19 pandemic, of the CHN, and the historical and continued push for self-determination, were integral components to the development and implementation of this research.

As a citizen of the Haida Nation, I grapple with navigating a "dual accountability" (Kovach, 2009, p. 85) to my Nation and to the academy. Doing respectful research with community should be a central goal for all researchers regardless of their ties to said communities—however, institutional pressures may result in researchers simply moving through the motions without meaningfully engaging. Simpson (2017) suggests that in post-secondary we may learn to read, write, and think critically—but the realities of conducting research in community require patience with uncertainty and an open mind. An ongoing distrust of research within Indigenous communities continues because of harmful, racist, and extractive research (Kovach, 2009). I am not immune from this distrust and demonstrating *yahguudang* (*respect*) throughout the research process to myself, the Nation, and while conducting interviews was integral to working towards gaining trust.

### **Research Method: Semi-Structured Interviews**

To better understand the role of the CHN during the COVID-19 pandemic I conducted a series of seven semi-structured, in-depth interviews. I received ethics approval through a course-based research ethics delegated review and the CHN's research application process. This project was designated as minimal risk. Prior to each interview, participants were sent an information sheet that outlined the purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations for this project. At the outset of each interview, I reviewed these information sheets with specific attention to consent, voluntariness, right to withdraw from the study, confidentiality, and data storage. I received verbal consent from participants to use the data for future study, participate in the research, and to have the interview recorded for transcription purposes.

The nature of qualitative research is in the moment, it is relationship based, and establishing trust and respect between participants and researchers is of the utmost importance (Guillemin & Heggen, 2008). The ethics procedures, forms, and informed consent do not prepare qualitative researchers for discomfort, questions, or decisions made in the moment. Guillemin and Heggen (2008) suggest that "ethically important moments," require researchers to "respond, often immediately" (p. 294). These moments are doubly important given the dual roles in which I am situated—as a researcher and community member.



## Sampling

Kovach (2009) argues that participants in qualitative research should be “chosen for what they can bring to the study” (p. 51), and this is in line with purposive sampling (Andrade, 2021). The specific nature of this research on CHN’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic was conducive to a purposively chosen sample, supplemented by snowball sampling (additional participants recommended during interviews). Through the course of conducting this research, I broadened the inclusion criteria from initially including only Haida participants living on Haida Gwaii during the COVID-19 pandemic, with some connection to CHN, to including settlers engaged with the CHN in some capacity, based on the recognition of the broad web of individuals involved with COVID-19 response. In qualitative research, determining sufficient participants often happens when researchers reach “data saturation,” in which little “new information” is garnered (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). The participants in this project included seven diverse individuals, initially contacted via email. They ranged in age from their 20s to their 50s, and each offered a unique insight into the CHN’s COVID-19 response.

## Participants and Confidentiality.

At the outset of each interview, I informed participants that a pseudonym would be assigned unless they preferred otherwise. All participants chose anonymity. Damianakis and Woodford (2021) outline the ethical tensions that may arise for researchers conducting qualitative research amongst “small, connected communities” (p. 714) and the increased concern for confidentiality in these settings given the heightened possibility that “participants know each other” (p. 710). Initially, when participants included only Haida citizens, I thought I would use Haida pseudonyms. However, when I decided to incorporate settlers into the participant group, I felt it would be inappropriate to give them Haida Names, and assigning English pseudonyms could lead to inadvertently revealing their identities. After careful consideration of confidentiality, I opted to limit the information provided. As such, I used pseudonyms P1-P7 to identify participants. Lahman et al. (2015) call for researchers to be transparent in their decisions around pseudonym decisions. While this choice may seem to dehumanize participants by reducing them to numbers, my intention was to protect their confidentiality while respecting their stories and related sensitivities. Participants have different life experiences, places, and backgrounds and do not represent a singular “Haida” or CHN perspective. Following interview transcription, transcripts were anonymized—and identifying information was replaced with an x or ellipses..

## The Interview Process

Interviews ranged from one to two hours. **Except for** two in-person interviews, most took place over Zoom Video Communications (hereafter “Zoom”) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. During the interviews, conversation flowed naturally, resulting in in-depth and rich data (see Guillemin & Heggen, 2008). Interviewing can be mentally exhausting with preparation, thinking through possible scenarios, conducting interviews, and reflecting. Dickson-Swift et al. (2007) recognize this exhaustion and suggest

that researchers give themselves time "between interviews" to process (p. 346). I scheduled time after each interview to reflect, **walking** the beaches and forests of Haida Gwaii.

### Analysis

As I conducted interviews and during the transcription process, I began to note emerging connections (Stuckey, 2015). Then, I analyzed the transcribed interview data using NVIVO 12 qualitative analytic software. Chenail (1997) emphasizes embracing the "muddle" of qualitative research as an integral part of the research process (p. 4) and centering the research questions helped keep this project aligned. The qualitative data analysis process is iterative, with "data analysis [often occurring] alongside data collection" as potential emerging themes arise (Galletta & Cross, 2013, p. 119). I conducted multiple rounds of inductive coding, beginning with descriptive codes, then aggregating and disaggregating codes, and finally organizing and finalizing the themes identified. Coding is a "decision-making process, where the decisions must be made in the context of a particular piece of research" (Elliot, 2018, p. 2850). At this stage, I cross-referenced themes with the transcripts in consideration of the research questions to develop a "story line" rooted within the data (Aronson, 1995).

### Findings and Discussion: The Haida Nations Response to COVID-19

Through this process of iterative data analysis, the following four main themes emerged from the data. (1) Haida Gwaii All Islands Response: *It was a whirlwind to be honest* (P3); (2) *The amount of work that a skeleton crew did within the CHN* (P5); (3) Jurisdiction and Sovereignty: *The Haida Nation has jurisdiction over Haida Gwaii* (P5); and (4) Looking back: *There is more work to be done* (P1) Lessons learned and Capacity. These findings outline the Haida Nation's response to COVID19 and the impacts of that response on governance capacity.

#### 1. Haida Gwaii All Islands Response: It was a whirlwind to be honest (P3)

This theme encompasses the initial reaction of the CHN to the COVID-19 pandemic.

We had a visceral reaction, it's hardly 100 some odd years since we were nearly wiped out by genocide. That visceral reaction lives in us ... we knew we had to do what worked for us ... we were just looking out for Haida Gwaii. (P1)

Indigenous people's survival as peoples is rooted in resistance to colonial violence (Simpson, 2018). Protecting the health and well-being of Haida citizens and Haida Gwaii itself was of the utmost importance during this time. The underlying health of Haida citizens also heightened concerns over COVID-19—as "we have a war on suicide, on standard health, heart disease ... and so on" (P1). The adoption of the incident command system and the multiple tables that arose throughout the course of the pandemic were in response to these concerns.

## **A Haida Incident Command System**

The incident command emergency response system (ICS) was adopted as some CHN staff had completed ICS training pre-COVID-19 pandemic. ICS (2021) sets out the rules and structures that can be adapted by organizations in responding to emergencies to maintain safety. When there are “multiple jurisdictions,” ICS adopts a “unified command” approach allowing for collaboration (ICS, 2012, p. 5). The CHN ICS included representatives from the CHN executive committee (includes elected representatives), an incident commander, communications officer, safety officer, and food security, points of entry/community liaison, community economic support, and business continuity. The Haida unified command table included Emergency Operation Center (EOC) leads from the settler communities and band councils.

Other tables—the protocol table, United Coast, and a Haida caucus—were also developed. The protocol table, already in existence because of the islands protocol agreements, included leadership from each community on Haida Gwaii. In addition, the “unified protocol table,” included “Bella Coola, the Tsimshian, Bella Bella,” and also welcomed representatives from the north and central coast, offered Indigenous communities the space to bring ideas together (P6). Lastly, reference to a Haida caucus refers to a Haida leadership table which included Old Massett and Skidegate band council leadership as well as the CHN. P7 recalls that the Haida caucus was implemented to ensure that leadership “were ... unified coming to that table,” with other governments. This structure allowed for the Haida Nation to assert self-determination in negotiations with colonial governments while also working collaboratively with other Indigenous and municipal governments.

Participants discussed the decision-making around declaring a state of emergency (SOE), working together, and prohibiting non-essential and non-resident travel to Haida Gwaii. P1 recalled that

the health administrators said there are two ventilators on island ... if we have huge outbreaks here [we won't be able to respond] ... the idea was just to keep COVID away [we did all we could] to shut this place down ... [The] municipalities were on board, they helped come up with the [SOE] because they were scared too ... We were just looking out for Haida Gwaii.

Reflecting on the CHN's reaction to the COVID-19 pandemic P5 noted that “we knew we had to do what worked for us.” This Haida Gwaii-specific response aligns with decolonization which requires a reclamation of power, place, and Nationhood—while, also working towards divesting ourselves from state control (Palmater, 2017). Imagining a society in which our governance is not answerable to imposed colonial governance for instance, would constitute such a freedom.

## **A Unified Approach: Lots of meetings (P7)**

The island-wide governance approach taken by the CHN often meant zoom calls with 20-40 people, as P1 recalled “we were collaborative ... almost [to] our detriment at times.” The CHN's response was “led

by the community... [and] another way to look at it... is to push back against the narrative that only specialists can tell the Haida Nation what is best, even in a pandemic" (P7). Despite jurisdictional tensions, the CHN "stood strong and really [focussed] on the health and safety of our Haida and Island citizens" (P3). This collaboration allowed for the CHN to receive support from islands organizations, establish working relationships with community health centers, and expedite process and procedures. Despite the existence of islands protocol agreements with municipal communities, "things [were] really messy and challenging" (P4). P5 emphasized the collaborative approach taken, "I am so proud of our Nation because everything we did included Canadians." This respect for Haida Gwaii, for islands residents, and assertion that the Haida Nation can take on issues of National interest, are all contained within the Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018). Thus, the CHN and Haida citizens were abiding by their inherent and legislated jurisdictions.

Participants further reflected on working with health organizations and that collaboration with local Haida health leadership was important. However, public health and health authorities often missed the mark in terms of working with an island community especially around contact tracing, declaration of outbreaks, and an additional layer of jurisdictions to navigate. P7 added that "they can't tell you how to do it best on Haida Gwaii that is when the local knowledge and community knowledge was really specific." Richardson and Crawford (2020) emphasize the importance of Indigenous-led "public health practice, grounded in self-determination" and its impact on the "relative resilience of Indigenous communities in Canada during COVID-19" (p. 1100). Thus, the assertion of jurisdiction and self-determination over health was an important component to the CHN's emergency response.

### **COVID brought itself to Haida Gwaii (P5): COVID-19 Outbreaks**

Tensions had been mounting over sports fishing before the first COVID-19 outbreak on Haida Gwaii. Under phase 3 of BC's restart plan, sports fishing was permitted; however, lodges opening violated the CHN's SOE, which subsequently led to Haida assertions of jurisdiction and rights on the land and waters (CHN, 2021d). This difference of opinion in terms of what was considered essential travel contributed to additional conflict. P1 notes "why are sports fisherman coming here taking food, during a global pandemic?" P5 further reflects:

Nobody brought COVID to Haida Gwaii. COVID brought itself to Haida Gwaii. It was still really hard the first time it came. It also shut down the islands at the right time because it got QC [Queen Charlotte] Lodge out, right? ... for a little while anyways.

Following multiple letters from the CHN to provincial officials and transportation providers and amidst mounting tensions with sports fishing lodges, a COVID-19 outbreak led to the province supporting the Nation's travel ban. Managing points of entry to Haida Gwaii was an integral part of maintaining the travel ban and work permit process. As P6 recalls, balance was important as they were "not trying to cut off our transportation system," which provides food, services, and workers.

Gaandlee Guu Jaalang *daughters of the rivers* was formed in July of 2020 and included “Haida women, matriarchs and allies” who camped at “the villages of Káng ‘Lngee and Sk’áaws” (CHN, 2021d, para. 24). The intention of the camp was to create a “space to safely teach harvesting and land-based skills to jáadaa *women* from all communities on Haida Gwaii” (CHN, 2021d, para. 24). The Haida Nation has been displaced from much of our territories through colonial and genocidal processes; this camp provided the time and space for learning, cultural reconnection, and relationship building while spending time in ancestral villages.

The formation of Gaandlee Guu Jaalang *daughters of the rivers* also “brought a lot of attention to Haida food sovereignty,” and now there is a “recognition that those lodges may be past their time here—where they operate not respecting Haida law, authority, and values” (P7). Guests to sports fishing lodges must abide by daily catch limits; however, they often continue to catch and release which has an impact on fish stocks. As the spokesperson for Gaandlee Guu Jaalang Adeana Young reflects, this violates the “Haida laws of reciprocity and respect . . . that have taught and governed her, her family, and her people since time immemorial” (Gilpin, 2020, para. 30). This resistance to extractive tourism, in particular luxury (fly-in) sports fishing lodges who continually disobey Haida laws and values, had been mounting for years and the disrespect demonstrated during COVID-19 brought tensions to a head. Monchalin (2016) argues that “to decolonize means to have the conviction and courage to be who we are – to stand up and assert our place in our homelands” (p. 293). The occupation and use of Haida territory by Gaandlee Guu Jaalang represents decolonial action through the assertion of Haida jurisdiction, law, and self-determination. Gaandlee Guu Jaalang were taking the time to connect and learn from each other while re-engaging with the practices that sustain Haida peoples and culture. At the same time, the sportfishing lodges being deemed an essential service and the disrespectful actions of lodge staff and guests in ignoring the Haida Nations leadership and guidance demonstrates settler colonialism and resulting settler privilege. Decolonization may further involve overhauling existing structures and relations that sustain oppression, racism, and colonialism.

## 2. The amount of work that a skeleton crew did within the CHN (P5).

Prior to the pandemic, CHN had undergone staffing changes, and existing staff—not including elected representatives—had been pared down significantly. A “pretty solid team” (P2) worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of island residents. As one participant recalled, the group lived off “chip salad,” working long hours to get things done. For instance, “some people were putting in 80-hour weeks . . . it was nonstop” (P3). Decolonization necessitates understanding the inherent power Indigenous peoples have while challenging colonially imposed domination (Monchalin, 2016; Palmater, 2017). P2 recalls: “nobody sees behind the scenes. . . . We could all be scrapping internally –but, to the government, we go out there, and everybody gathers together for a unified approach.” The CHN’s learning process has continually involved [getting] “the messy stuff on the table . . . [seeking wise advice and counsel] . . . then the collective response is very strong and strategic” (P7). This process demonstrates a coming together of the Nation to represent collective interests and protect Haida values, while abiding by Haida protocol

and seeking wise counsel. Elected representatives and staff gained significant experience throughout the COVID-19 response process.

**The Women . . . just powering through (P1). It takes strong women to support a Nation.**

Looking back, participants expressed gratitude for the women who tirelessly and fearlessly "held these islands together" (P5). They spoke of leaders who came in to support the Nation and whose unwavering support and work ethic helped sustain governance. P1 noted that they are grateful for the women— "it was so terrifying, but I think the women had it sorted out." Participants emphasized the leadership of women as integral to the strategic responses of the Nation during pandemic response.

**Strategic Response: Thinking about the longer term.**

The CHN closed Haida Gwaii's borders, negotiated with the provincial government, health authorities, and transportation, launched an essential work permit system, and navigated jurisdictional disputes. Simpson (2017) contends that grounded Nation-based alternatives to state power are integral in moving beyond colonial confines. P7 reflected that the

Nation's response . . . was very strategic in terms of looking at longer term measures. Even earlier on when we were in the thick of the learning phase of the pandemic. There were conversations about how our measures would eventually be operationalized and what [that] could mean for sovereignty on Haida Gwaii enduring past the pandemic.

The essential work permit process was launched in May 2020, outlining procedures for workers to receive permits before arriving on Haida Gwaii (CHN, 2021d). Examples of strategic long-term outcomes included the movement on sports fishing lodges and establishing a code of conduct, and the essential work permitting process connecting to the "tourism pledge and . . . orientation process" (P7). Setting these processes in motion was done to ensure tourists come prepared to abide by Haida values, such as respecting Haida Gwaii and Haida culture. The work permitting process provided important information regarding the training needed on island so that there are "more opportunities for Haida Gwaii" residents (P3). This baseline understanding may also help to strengthen Haida Gwaii's economy by supporting the creation of new businesses. These actions demonstrate strategic thinking and planning despite managing considerable stress while resisting colonially imposed management and asserting Haida jurisdiction.

Ideally, the Nation could continue to build upon the relationships established throughout the course of the pandemic. As P3 recalls, "we did have a big meeting with BC ferries . . . and we talked about the [Haida] language being on the ferries. I don't know if we would have had that conversation" pre-pandemic. At the United Coast table, P1 recalled that there was dialogue around "terrible injustices" occurring in other Indigenous communities, and that the table allowed for Nation-to-Nation alignment. Simpson (2008) emphasized the importance of building relationships with other Nations as it

“promotes decolonization, and peaceful co-existence, and it builds solidarity among Indigenous Nations” (p. 84). Multiple Nations came together on co-signed letters, including one on restricting non-resident recreational fishing in their respective waters (CHN, 2021d). In future emergencies, leaning on these Nation-to-Nation relationships may be mutually beneficial in pushing for Indigenous authority in emergency response.

Establishing the essential work permit process and point of entry procedures required the enforcement of jurisdictional borders. As P6 recalled, at points of entry (air, boat, and/or ferries) workers or citizens would be met by a Haida information officer to ensure they were aware of the SOE, had an isolation plan in place (if applicable), and/or to check for their work permit. P1 reflected that “we had fishermen where the [email] subject was permission to come ashore? . . . That is what they would say in the old days,” they would ask first (a Haida value). Thus, the CHN demonstrated the embedding of Haida values and lifeways into policies, procedures, and governance.

### **3. Jurisdiction and Sovereignty: The Haida Nation has jurisdiction over Haida Gwaii (P5).**

This theme includes the CHN's assertions of jurisdiction and self-determination and subsequent reactions from municipal governance, the BC government, and locals. The presumed authority of colonial government led in Indigenous “communities . . . [being] especially subject to suffering ill effects from decisions made by other governments” (Metcalf & Huskisson-Snyder, 2021, p. 495). Indigenous Nationhood requires us to uphold our responsibilities to ourselves, our cultures, and Nations while striving for self-determination. and asserting Indigenous governance (Alfred, 2009; Pasternak, 2014). Pasternak (2014) outlines the assumed jurisdiction of the state as presumed Canadian “authority over territorial space” disregarding existing laws, legal orders, and peoples whose land was pre-empted for colonial use (p. 160).

Within a Haida context, the Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018) under A6.S10 states that “the [CHN] shall provide for the common defense of the Haida Nation” (p. 5). Protecting the Nation from the plight of a worldwide pandemic meant violating Western rules while upholding Haida values and constitutional obligations. However, assumed colonial jurisdiction supersedes Haida jurisdiction, ignoring Haida laws, values, culture, and self-determined governance systems.

Despite some mixed reactions to the CHN's assertion of jurisdiction, most were positive. There was some pushback to the 14-day isolation period, and that “really showed a lot of people's true colours, a lot of people you thought were allies . . . It also showed how many people . . . respect Haida values and our way to govern our own land” (P3). Reflecting on the impacts of colonialism on Haida citizens, P1 suggested that “. . . that is the worst oppression when our very own start to throw that colonial system in our way.” Some conflictual jurisdictional issues arose as some people abided by the Nation and/or their local EOCs, and others opted to abide by the BC government. As P6 reflected, “for us, we are bound by how we live as [Haida peoples], and they are bound by provincial law,” and resultant obligations as the province provides them with funding.

Other participants felt there was some flip-flopping based on convenience. For instance, one interviewee recalled the sentiments that they are "absolutely going to acknowledge that this is Haida land and the CHN should be in charge, but since they're not, I'm going to follow the province because they say I can travel off Haida Gwaii, and I don't have to isolate" (P4). At one point "the municipalities" said "they don't want to be a part" of the essential work permit process, citing legal and jurisdictional reasons (P1), and potential "liability in participating in island wide processes" (P7). Acknowledgment of Haida leadership varied amongst the municipal communities, and when the municipalities pulled out of "the unified command processes . . . that created a lot of discord and distrust" (P7). Eventually, following ongoing dialogue, the municipalities returned to the table, participating in the process to varying degrees. Referencing the islands protocol agreements, P4 wished the municipalities had been able to support the Nation more consistently—they recall that it was interesting what a

hurdle it was [for] the municipalities and the regional districts; [and their] unwillingness to push the envelope . . . from outside the little box [they] are allowed to operate in . . . they are not going to make any moves that they have to take a hit for.

Those who disregarded the Nation's leadership were "the most challenging . . . the ones that really didn't acknowledge Haida sovereignty" (P7). Davis et al. (2017) suggest that this positionality may be a result of Canadians "investment in the status quo" as "they are the beneficiaries of past and present injustices" (p. 399). From this perspective, these dissenting opinions could reflect fear and complacency.

Participants referenced both Haida and non-Haida tourism and business owners and empathized with their concerns over economic impacts. However, as P5 recalled it seemed that municipalities supported the Nation until it "became inconvenient"—often economically—to do so.

I explained this to some of my municipal friends, I said you know we have essentially been through hell and back and . . . we are still here. We will as an island, not just the Haida Nation, will still be here. There are going to be hardships, but we are going to survive . . . This is Haida Gwaii, Haida territory . . . The Haida Nation has jurisdiction over Haida Gwaii. (P5)

This refusal to succumb to colonial erasure, assimilation, and genocide is evident in the strength of Indigenous Nations (Wakeham, 2021). This refusal demonstrates perseverance and resilience, remaining steadfast in asserting jurisdiction and Nation-based rights.

Resurgence requires moving beyond colonial confines while simultaneously reimagining and reinvigorating Indigenous Nationhood. This reinvigoration includes exercising the right to jurisdiction and self-determination over all aspects of life. Simpson (2017) argues that nation-based resurgence involves centering IKSs as "engagement with Indigenous systems changes Indigenous peoples" (p. 49). Looking back on the varied jurisdictional issues highlights frustration at the inability to respect and comprehend Haida self-determination.



To the average person who isn't aware of our ability to be self-sovereign it would make them scared ... The doubt, the why aren't we doing what BC is doing? Can we do this? And I know we can do this ... I have always known that we can do whatever we want to govern our Nation the way we see fit. (P1)

Indigenous Nations continue to fight for survival physically, culturally, and linguistically—this survival undermines the state's assimilatory, elimination tactics and demonstrates considerable strength and inherent responsibility (Alfred, 2017; Wakeham, 2021).

The CHN continuously met and negotiated with the BC government, BC ferries, Emergency Management British Columbia (EMBC), and public health. Participants recalled frequent meetings in which pressure was put on the BC government to support the travel advisory to Haida Gwaii and in declaring the outbreak. P7 suggested that working with EMBC was challenging:

For all the things that the provincial government and EMBC says they do in terms of acknowledging Indigenous sovereignty ... They have not embodied the values of reconciliation . . . It was incredibly colonizing in the most problematic ways right from the get-go . . . It was really eye opening ... The main message from them was you have no sovereignty in an emergency.

When EMBC came onboard to enforce the travel ban and work permit process they insisted on bringing in conservation officers, and having process and procedure vetted through them, which as many participants recalled felt somewhat paternalistic. Participants also referenced working with Northern and public Health and jurisdictional issues therein to determine cases on Haida Gwaii – which often involved relying on resident's self-disclosure.

### **Self-Governance and Self-determination: The Haida Nation is a Strong Nation (P3)**

The Haida Nations self-determination and self-governance capacity was continually demonstrated. P1 recalled that there was never a doubt in their mind that “this is what we do, we are self-governing.” Palmater (2017) contends that decolonization requires “a balance of both resistance and resurgence,” resisting imposed state processes and revitalizing Nation based solutions grounded in IKSs, land, and culture (p. 77). As Article 4 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) exemplifies: “Indigenous peoples, in exercising their right to self-determination, have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs” (United Nations, 2007, pp. 4-5). Resurgence requires moving beyond colonial confines while simultaneously reimagining and reinvigorating Nationhood. Simpson (2017) argues that nation-based resurgence involves centering IKSs as “engagement with Indigenous systems changes Indigenous peoples” (p. 49).

For some participants, this emergency response process demonstrated and reinforced the Haida Nations ability to assert broader self-determination. P3 recalled that throughout the pandemic it became clear to them that

we can be our own sovereign nation . . . we have been able to protect our own people, protect our own Nation . . . [and that] if you unite your local communities together for the greater of your citizens . . . you can do really great things. And you can do it without any permissions from the BC government. We don’t really need them at times because we know our own people . . . The Haida Nation is a strong Nation, and we show that—we lead by example. We say we are going to do something, then we do it. Even if have other people telling us not to do something we stick to our word. And stick with our protocols.

As P6 recalled “we are sovereign and we want people to know that, and we want them to feel that . . . this is Haida Gwaii this is Haida land, and we are capable.” Corntassel and Bryce (2012) argue that Indigenous self-determination is inherent, “asserted and acted upon,” (p. 152) and thus, Indigenous Nations do not need to be recognized as self-determined by the state to assert their rights. These assertions exemplify the determination of the CHN to abide by Haida values and resultant governance principles while continually grappling with colonial mechanisms of control.

Reflections on the CHN’s response exuded pride in the united approach taken on Haida Gwaii and the self-governance capacity demonstrated. As was exemplified in Haada<sup>1</sup> Laas (1993) “ultimately, it is up to us, the Haida Nation, to establish our place in the world” (p. 3). P5 suggested that “there were hiccups, but we did do this together as an island under the jurisdiction and leadership of the Haida Nation . . . nobody budged us—we did it our way.” This increased confidence in maintaining Haida values supports and strengthens the evolving nature of self-government on Haida Gwaii. This assertion of Nationhood demonstrated governance capacity; however, it also illustrated that there is more work ahead.

#### **4. Looking Back: *There is more work to be done* (P1) lessons learned and capacity building.**

The final theme encompasses the recognition that more work lies ahead in establishing relationships, asserting Haida authority, and capacity building. Participants referenced the need for education of island residents as to the Haida Nations’ jurisdiction and governance. This theme also includes silver linings that occurred throughout the CHN’s emergency response and what can be harnessed moving forward from a governance perspective.

When asked to reflect on the CHN’s emergency response and consider what could have been done differently, participants highlighted the importance of asserting jurisdiction. P1 recalled that assertions of Haida leadership could have been more clearly addressed in the wording used, for instance, moving from “collaboration to [we] invite you to join us.” P7 similarly reflected that the CHN could have gone “into those negotiations [with the province] a little firmer earlier on.” Participants demonstrated an overall sense of gratitude and pride in the Nation’s response, as well as an understanding that there is

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<sup>1</sup> Old spelling.

more work needed to move forward from a governance perspective while building upon existing relationships. Reflections also emphasized the importance of communication between islands' governance, and missed opportunities to work more collaboratively under the COVID-19 SOE with "health, health centers, [the First Nations Health Authority] and northern health" (P4).

The stress of responding to a global pandemic, asserting jurisdiction and Nationhood, navigating family obligations, and conducting the affairs of the Nation led to burnout amongst many CHN elected representatives and staff. Taking care of physical and mental health is often put aside in times of extreme stress. P4 referenced the importance of "self-care and recognizing that if you're not in a good place, then you're not [necessarily] making good decisions." P2 suggested that additional external support could have offset the impacts on staff— "it was really stressful—we did burn out a couple of people . . . maybe we [could have contracted] more people to help with the day-to-day or incident command . . . [or] to have more alternatives." Participants also suggested solutions to both avoid and combat burnout. For instance, P1 recalled that it would have been helpful to have guidance and support from elders, mentors, chiefs, and/or matriarchs during the process. Further, additional team building within the CHN was also noted as important for governance moving forward (P1). Haida people's values and ways of life are grounded within the potlatch system—feasting, cultural sharing, community events, memorials, pole raisings, weddings, namings, adoptions, and potlatches are integral to culture and to overall well-being. Not being able to gather and engage in these practices and events is not just a minor inconvenience, as potlatches are where Haida laws and values are made and upheld, stories shared, and culture sustained.

P4 reflected that despite burnout, stress, and long hours, a "connection and responsibility to the Nation and to Haida Gwaii", seemed to keep people going. The deep responsibility that Haida people have to protect Haida Gwaii and the Nation is as follows:

It's just you have to . . . there is no other choice. We have to . . . and there are all of these systems in play against us whether we are saving our own people [from]—a global pandemic or our trees, water, [or whatever it may be]. There is just no choice. (P1).

This statement exemplifies an inherent responsibility to uphold Haida values and sustain Haida culture in perpetuity. These values are also exemplified within the above-mentioned Haida proclamation which notes the responsibility to perpetuate Haida culture and heritage (Constitution, 2018). In asserting jurisdiction over the pandemic response, the CHN was concerned with protecting Haida language speakers, learners, and citizens—and ensuring the health and well-being of all islands residents.

Participants recalled that having to navigate being unprepared to respond to COVID-19 should serve as a lesson moving forward and emphasized the need for additional safety plans, equipment, and training. In terms of capacity, an analysis is underway of the work permits and the resultant information will help facilitate understanding of employment gaps on island. Participants also highlighted the potential for and need to prepare for concurrent emergencies. For instance, P1 recalled that "we were in a unified command meeting and there was a tsunami warning . . . [so] thinking about other emergencies too," and

being better prepared in case of power outages is important. P4 suggested that a broader conversation with everyone involved in the COVID-19 response could be useful in terms of getting "people's feedback [on] what worked and didn't work," and integrating that feedback into future emergency response plans and/or training. This resolve to use COVID-19 as a learning opportunity and to improve capacity is further testament to the commitment to the continued development of Haida governance.

Opinions on when to align with BC's regulations and reopening phases differed. Some participants noted that events at the conclusion of the CHN's SOE and pandemic response left things feeling unresolved. There were also references to the loss of support from community and band council governance for the SOE and pressure from businesses to reopen. Additionally, participants recalled the importance of following processes and procedures until the end to ensure resolution and implement a relaunch strategy. Others referenced the importance of maintaining connections by continuing the work of the multiple tables formed during the COVID-19 response. Lastly, some participants emphasized the importance of resolution and wrapping things up in a good way—including the acknowledgment of staff, volunteers, and leadership—for instance, through hosting a ceremony or dinner.

### **Silver Linings - The sovereign acts, all those things pushed us a little more forward (P6)**

Participants referenced multiple silver linings including assertions of Nationhood and jurisdiction, as well as movement on existing files such as the reconciliation and fisheries reconciliation files (see: Haida Laas, 2020). CHN developed an emergency response system and learned from this experience to better inform future emergency response—"if anything like this ever happens again—not just a virus . . . we know exactly what to do" (P6). P4 also emphasized strengthened inter-governmental relationships as preparation "for any sort of future emergencies."

Food independence has long been of concern on Haida Gwaii because of dependence on the ferry for food, and the high cost of living. This focus on food independence, gardening, harvesting, hunting, and fishing offered some light and distraction from continued stress. P7 referenced ongoing projects that consider "what it means to garden within the ecosystem of Haida Gwaii . . . respecting Haida values . . . I think that has been a beautiful thing to come out of this." Further, P7 noted that the *Gandlee Guu Jaalang Daughters of the Rivers* brought both media and community attention to "Haida food sovereignty." P5 recalled that

incident command included food sovereignty, then there was envisioning the food security strategy, which now includes clean water . . . That collective thinking and coming together for the greater good of Haida Gwaii . . . There was a lot of beauty in amongst fear and ugliness, so many little diamonds.

The concern over food independence was also tied to the impact of COVID-19 on Haida Gwaii's economy and ensuring that everyone was taken care of.

The importance of using the time in isolation to learn and preserve the Haida language was exemplified as one of the few benefits of the pandemic. Cullis-Suzuki (2020) notes the importance of using her time in quarantine to learn and teach the Haida language to her children— “in *Xaayda kil* we can find stability, comfort, and ceremony” (para. 18). Participant 5 recalled that hearing the Haida language during a webinar put on by the CHN was “grounding,” and provided comfort in a time of uncertainty.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was an increase in understanding of the Haida Nation’s governance structures and relationship development, webinars, and the visitor’s pledge. Increased attention on the economy highlighted the need for CHN to consider and engage in conversations regarding Haida Gwaii’s economy. Participants reflected on the development and formulation of the webinars that provided information on COVID-19 but also covered topics spanning water, food sovereignty/gardening, mental health, and the Haida language, among others. Webinar panelists included academic health leads, doctors, and local community members. Participants noted that the webinars offered community learning opportunities, humour, and connection in a time of isolation. The visitor’s pledge was also emphasized as an important silver lining—as it outlines “what it means to be a respectful visitor” (P7). This movement away from extractive industry and towards more sustainable and respectful tourism is emphasized throughout the Haida Gwaii pledge.

### Conclusion

The CHN led COVID-19 emergency response on Haida Gwaii, asserting Haida jurisdiction and self-determination. The current study considered the expanded role of the CHN throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and the tensions that arose – and lessons that can be applied moving forward. The CHN’s role shifted to protecting Haida culture, rights, and language holders, Haida Gwaii, and Haida people from a global pandemic while also trying to maintain the day-to-day governance of the Nation.

The Haida Nation’s assertions of Nationhood throughout the COVID-19 pandemic were under the Constitution of the Haida Nation (2018), Haida law/values, and governing authority. The CHN asserted self-determination through negotiating with BC, never wavering on jurisdiction, and utilizing this opportunity to move existing files forward. During the COVID-19 response, the CHN leadership and team were inclusive of all Islands residents and elected representatives. The Haida Nation illustrated the capacity to take on island-wide governance issues and the resolve and ability to protect and defend Haida Gwaii and its residents.

In terms of strengthening Haida governance, potential capacity gaps and improvements were identified, and the CHN developed relationships with municipal governments on Haida Gwaii, other Nations, and communities on the coast and came to understand the challenges ahead in working with colonial governance systems. Throughout this project, it became clear that a knowledge gap exists on Haida Gwaii in terms of Indigenous rights and self-determination, Haida constitutional rights, inherent values, and ways of being. At the CHN the importance of team building, safety protocols and procedures,

additional supports, and more firmly asserting jurisdiction over Haida Gwaii, were noted as key lessons learned that could inform future governance and emergency response.

The remote location of Haida Gwaii and the disparate health of Indigenous peoples requires consideration of broader changes. Richardson and Crawford (2020) suggest a broader overhaul and decolonization of "health care at individual, organizational and policy levels" that respects and integrates Indigenous "knowledge, expertise, and strong leadership . . . to face COVID-19" (p.1100). Although local, public health, and health jurisdiction were mentioned, the health care response to the COVID-19 pandemic warrants further consideration and research.

Overall, this study emphasized the importance of the Haida Nation's assertions of jurisdiction and self-determination. Simpson (2017) argues that as Indigenous Nations "we are the experts, because we are self-determining" and that harnessing our power as Nations is necessitated regardless of the state's recognition of that power (p. 227). The lessons learned throughout the course of the CHN's pandemic response provide important insight into improving governance and capacity and continuing to educate Haida and non-Haida residents. Palmater (2017) contends that Indigenous people's resistance to colonial imposition includes a "focus on sovereignty, justice, and well-being for all" (p. 154). There "is nothing radical about Indigenous peoples wanting to live in relative safety and well-being and to enjoy and protect their territories from irreparable harm" (Palmater, 2017, p. 154). In asserting Haida jurisdiction and Nationhood the CHN upheld ancestral rights and values in its response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Reflections on research design**

This research uses a decolonizing lens that centers community while balancing institutional obligations. Kovach (2009) explains that using a decolonial lens can help researchers navigate their dual roles and make decisions that align with their research projects. Applying a decolonial lens to research is not a rejection of "western methods and theories"; however, a decolonial lens allows flexibility to determine what works best for each project (Datta, 2018, p. 11; Smith, 2012). Using a decolonizing lens and a community-grounded approach was a strength of this research and enabled an understanding of the governance challenges of the Haida Nation during the COVID-19 response. This study demonstrates the inherent responsibility of Haida peoples to protect Haida Gwaii and Haida culture.

The previously mentioned history of pandemics, well-founded distrust of the state, and general frustration coupled with compounded stress over the course of the pandemic resulted in emotional moments in the process of conducting interviews. Hannem (2014) notes that researchers must remember that "we enter the field as human beings with an emotional nature; that is, we must be willing to acknowledge and accept that we cannot stop ourselves from *feeling* in the research moment" (p. 268). Being a community member throughout the COVID-19 pandemic made navigating these emotional moments easier as I could empathize with the participants based on lived experience. That said,

responding to emotional moments over Zoom—was more challenging than it would have been in person.

The detailed information, stories, and laughter shared demonstrated trust in my abilities as a researcher. The findings highlight the importance of continued assertions of self-determination and jurisdiction while providing insight into areas in which capacity could be increased. I was able to conduct this project at an opportune time as the CHN's emergency response operations had been scaled back significantly; however, the response was still fresh in people's minds. The results also demonstrate the importance of ongoing work to bridge knowledge gaps and understanding of the CHN and the Haida Nation.

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