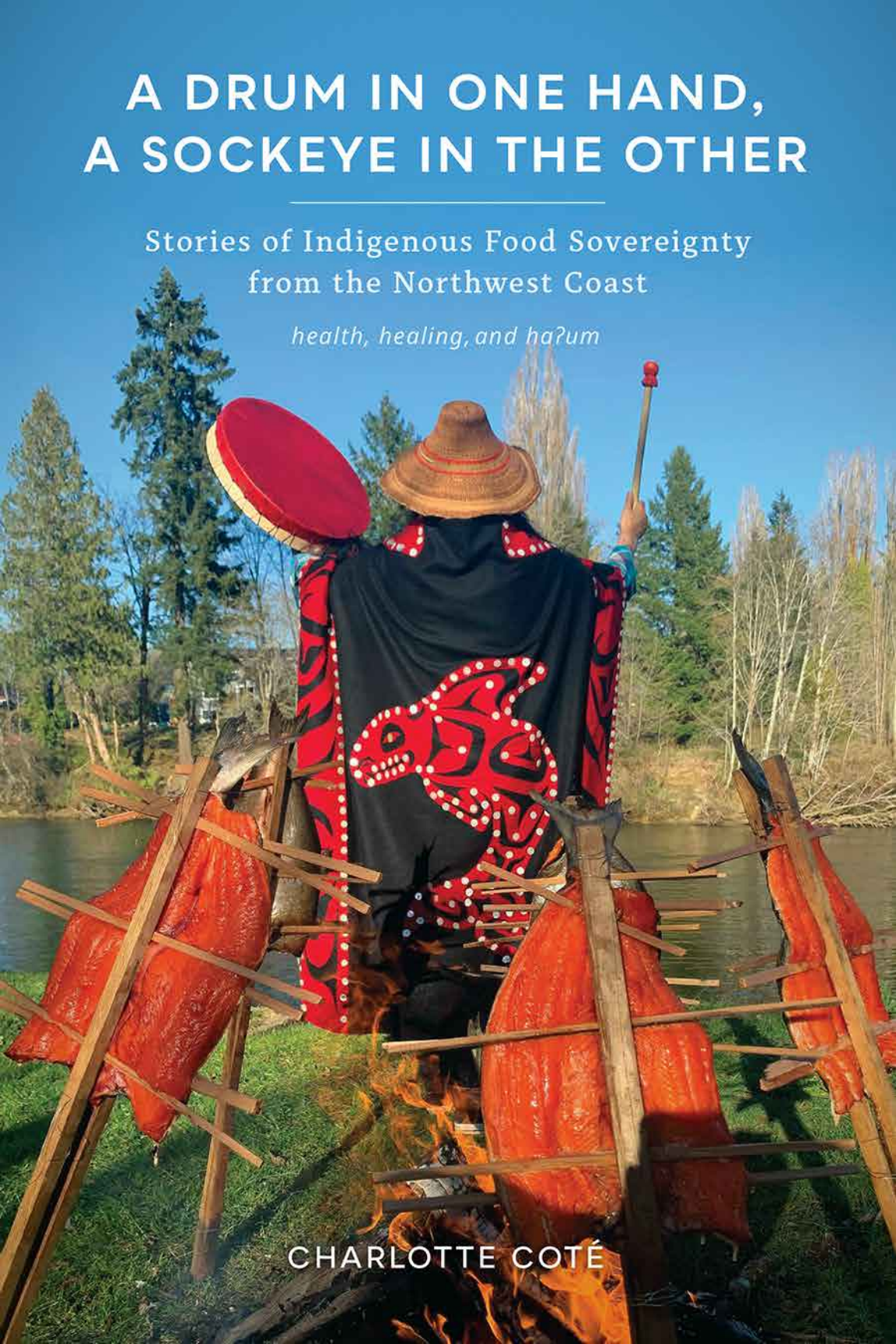
A DRUM IN ONE HAND, A SOCKEYE IN THE OTHER

Stories of Indigenous Food Sovereignty from the Northwest Coast

health, healing, and haʔum



CHARLOTTE COTÉ

Charlotte Coté and Coll Thrush, *Series Editors*

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This book is dedicated to the warriors for Indigenous food sovereignty, cultural and language revitalization, and environmental and social justice, who have the audacity to dream of a better and healthier future and a world filled with joy.

ʔƛ̓eekoo, thank you!

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PREFACE

haʔum, We Are What We Eat

ʔukłaamaḥ łuutiismaʔuƛ̓, ʔuḥuksiƛ̓a mamałḥiqiic ʕimtii Charlotte. ċišaaʔaqsupsi ʔaḥʔaaʔaƛ̓ nuučaaṅułʔaqsup. histaqšiƛ̓si ċuumaʕas. My name is łuutiismaʔuƛ̓, which means "carrying thunder." My English name is Charlotte. I am Tseshaht and Nuu-chah-nulth. I come from an area known as Somass in the English language, which is recognized as the city of Port Alberni.

I am from the whaling lineage of sayaačapis, who was my great-great grandfather and wiitsaḥẇiłim, my great-great grandmother. My maternal great grandparents were ʔapṗikuʔis Watty Watts and ƛ̓uuyaaẏaqšiił Eva Thomas. My grandparents were hiišcatimiik Hughie Watts and Grace Watts. My parents were maḥima Evelyn Georg and Jack Georg.[1] I was born and raised in my village of Tseshaht, which is one of the fourteen autonomous communities that make up the Nuu-chah-nulth Nation, people who are connected through language, culture, and a tradition of hunting whales. Our traditional territory is along the west coast of Vancouver Island in British Columbia.

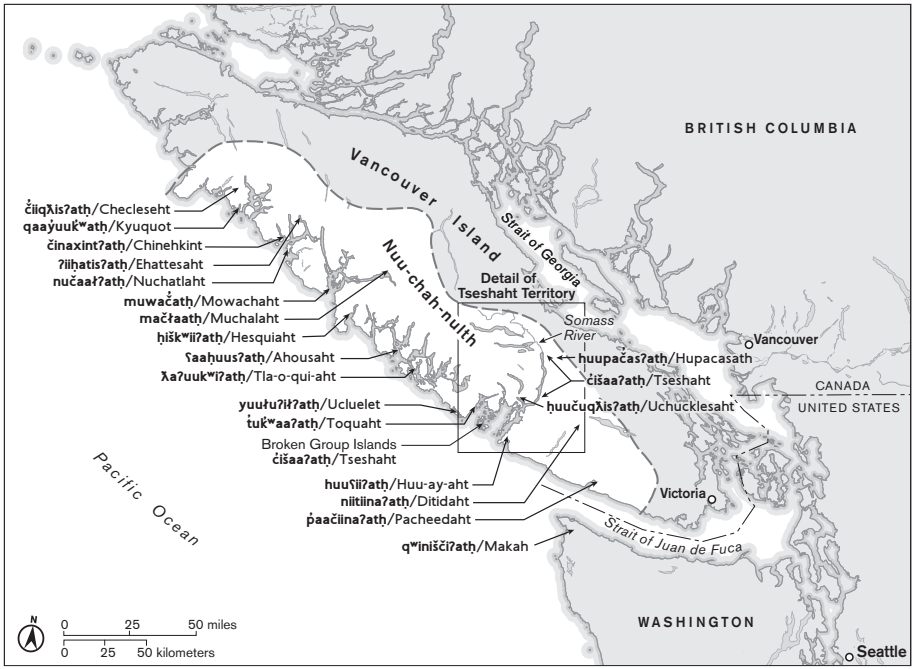
On many weekends during the summer months when I was a young girl, my grandpa Hughie would drive to the fishing docks in Port Alberni in the late afternoon when the fishermen would be coming in with their fresh catch. He would buy a big bucket of whatever seafood was in season—sea urchin, clams, crab, or halibut—and when he got home he would cook these in a big pot on the stove. Once they were cooked he would put everything in the middle of the

dinner table and tell all his grandchildren who were there visiting to dig in. I loved this feast my grandpa would prepare for us. Sometimes he would throw a few salmon heads into the mix and then gross us out by eating their eyes. We could never figure out how he could eat something that looked so nasty, and it was not until I was an adult that I attempted to eat a fish eye. And, to my surprise, it tasted wonderful! Today one of my favorite meals is salmon head soup.

I grew up next door to my grandparents and within a very tight-knit extended family. I was raised in a family and community that maintained deep and strong connections to our haʔumštup, variety of traditional foods, such as qaałqaawi, trailing blackberries; saamin, salmon; ṗuuʔi, halibut; muwač, venison; a range of seafood such as ƚučup, sea urchin, and siiḥm̓uu, herring spawn; and many kinds of plants, such as m̓aayi, salmonberry shoots, and qiłcuup, cow parsnip. I learned how to cut, clean, and process salmon when I was a very young girl. My summers were spent picking qaałqaawi with my relatives along the steep ravines in the mountains in our ḥaḥuuƚi, ancestral homelands, and I have kept up this tradition into adulthood. My family regularly ate haʔum, traditional food, and I was raised with a keen sense of what it meant to be tiičʕaqƛ̓, holistically healthy. I have continued to make healthy dietary choices throughout my lifetime, and to take a holistic approach to health, making a strong effort to keep physically, emotionally, and spiritually well. I work hard at being healthy, but I am not a fanatic, and there are times when I have had to eat fast food or make an unhealthy food choice, but I am conscious of it when I do this and limit the times I cheat on my diet; or I should say cheat on my health. I am a firm believer in the motto: "You are what you eat." So throughout my lifetime I have made a great effort to stay connected to our haʔum by harvesting and processing salmon, one of our main staple foods, harvesting plants and medicines, and eating organic and nutritious foods.

I feel fortunate to have been raised to be health conscious because, throughout my lifetime, I have seen a dramatic decrease in the health of my community and in the health of many of my relatives. Where we once fed our children plates filled with nutritious traditional meals of salmon and other seafood, and berries and other plants that grew in our ḥaḥuuƚi, I began to see community members and relatives become more and more addicted to processed foods, to fast food and to soft drinks, foods that are nutritionally unhealthy. What brought us down this unhealthy road? This question sparked the research and writing of this book. This question becomes even more important as our global society faces a major health crisis with a worldwide pandemic.

In this book I share many of our Nuu-chah-nulth words, especially our words for the variety of haʔum that we harvest in our territory. I was introduced to these names when I was a young girl, and for many years I did not know the English names for our haʔum such as ẗuċup, siiḥm̓uu, m̓aayi, and qiłcuup, and I have continued to refer to them by their Nuu-chah-nulth names. Today many of our community members use the Nuu-chah-nulth names for our haʔum rather than the English equivalent, and their continual use is in itself a significant act of decolonization. Viewed holistically, food, language, culture, and identity are all intertwined; utilizing our Tseshaht words keeps breathing life into our language, reinforces our cultural identity, and is embedded in our Tseshaht philosophy of ḥačatakma ċawaak—everything is interconnected.[2]



Map of Nuu-chah-nulth territory. *Created by Ben Pease with assistance from Darrell Ross Sr.*

Map of Tseshaht territory. *Created by Ben Pease with assistance from Darrell Ross Sr.*

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ƛ̓eekoo

Many people have encouraged, supported, and guided me during the process of researching and writing and have helped me shape my ideas, theories, methodology, and stories into this book. ʔuušy̓akšiƛeʔicuu. ʕatiqšiƛmiḥsamaḥ siiẇa, you have all done something good and I want to acknowledge all of you.

First, I want to thank my wonderful family. When I had doubt, you were always there to lift me up, to provide love and encouragement and to keep me grounded in my culture. nučḥakaḥ čišaaʔaqsup, siiẇaaqḥsuu ḥaaḥuupa, quʔiiy̓ap siy̓a. I am a proud Tseshaht woman because of your teachings. ƛ̓eekoo Uncle Rudy and Aunty Marilyn for your love and support and for always being willing to help me and Gail with fishing, teaching me how to smoke salmon, and providing your smokehouse whenever I need it. A heartfelt thank you to Aunty Millie for your love and always checking in on me to make sure I am doing okay. And a warm thanks to Aunty Matilda for your love and help with finding Nuu-chah-nulth nutritional information.

To my sister Gail, your love, strength, and commitment to keeping our Tseshaht community strong and healthy empowers and inspires me. To my cousin Lisa, you are my rock. When I am feeling stressed you are always there to tell me, "It's going to be okay. You got this." Sis Charlene, ƛ̓eekoo for your love and encouragement. To my cousin Lena and husband Darrell, I am truly grateful

for when we get together and immerse ourselves in our culture and language. Darrell, I appreciate your help in finding information on our haʔum, traditional foods, and for assisting me with the map designs. ƛ̓eekoo to my nephews Darrell Jr. and Ed, and my cousin Melanie for providing your awesome photos. Ed, I am so happy we used your beautiful photo of sis Gail at our family beach for the book cover.

Many relatives I write about in this book have passed on but have left me with wonderful memories and the cultural and foods knowledge they instilled in me throughout my lifetime. To my beautiful mom Evelyn, my wonderful grandparents Grace and Hughie, and my amazing aunty Misbun—sharing these stories helps keep all of you in my heart. To all my relatives, I could not have written this book without your love and support, and I am truly blessed to have all of you in my life.

To the Tseshaht, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Northwest Coast people who shared your cultural and foods knowledge with me while sitting together at Potlatches, at Tribal Canoe Journeys, or just sharing a meal or talking around the table, and especially to Sharon, Linda, Les, Richard, Laura, Shaunee, Patricia, Cathy and Kalilah, I am truly grateful to you for sharing your stories with me. In particular, I want to extend my deepest thanks to Nitanis, John, and your incredible family. You inspire me with your warrior spirit and your commitment to living a life grounded in our foodways, language, and cultural traditions. And a special thanks for sharing your photos.

For assistance with Nuu-chah-nulth words and phrases, I extend a heartfelt ƛ̓eekoo to Adam Werle, Della Preston, and my cousins Linsey and Lena. I also want to thank Denise Titian, Debbie Preston, and my late Uncle Bob for your photos.

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I express my sincere gratitude to the University of Washington's Department of American Indian Studies (AIS), the Center for American Indian/Indigenous Studies, and the Canadian Studies Program for funding and grant support. A special thanks to my AIS colleagues and staff for your support and encouragement. To all my students, your enthusiasm for learning about Indigenous food sovereignty motivates me to keep doing this work.

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ƛ̓eekoo, thank you all for sharing in my journey. ʔuušýakšiƛəʔicuu.

PHONETIC KEY

The Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet that is more or less standard today on the west coast of Vancouver Island was established in the work *Our World, Our Ways: Ṫaaɬaaqsapa Cultural Dictionary*, published by the Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council in 1991. It is an Americanist phonetic alphabet, slightly adapted from the alphabet used in anthropologist-linguist Edward Sapir and linguist Morris Swadesh's book *Nootka Texts*. University of Victoria linguist and language activist ƛ̓iisƛ̓iisaʔapɬ Dr. Adam Werle says the Ṫaaɬaaqsapa dictionary mistakenly declares that the Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet is "a modified form of the International Phonetic Alphabet" (IPA). He notes that there is no direct connection between the Nuu-chah-nulth alphabet and the IPA.

The Nuu-chah-nulth spellings and definitions of our words that I use in this book were provided by Dr. Werle with assistance from Tseshaht members yaacuuʔisʔaqs Linsey Haggard and čiisma Della Preston. I use these words in their Nuu-chah-nulth spellings as a way to empower our language and resist colonialism, rather than respelling them in English. Language, culture, and identity are intertwined, and as our Indigenous languages become more endangered, it becomes more critical that we keep our languages alive. As described in the epilogue, in June 2020 I began taking online language classes with Dr. Werle and other Nuu-chah-nulth language learners, and my language journey continues to the present.

Following is a sound chart to help non-Nuu-chah-nulth readers. For a list of all of the Nuu-chah-nulth words used, see the glossary at the back of the book.

ɑ	sounds like the “ɑ” in *what*
ɑɑ	sounds like ɑ long, drawn-out “ɑ,” ɑs in *father*
c	sounds like the “ts” in *hats*
ċ	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “ts” but pronounced forcefully
č	sounds like the “ch” in *church*
c̆	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “ch” but pronounced forcefully
e	hɑs the sound in *pet*
ee	hɑs the sound in *eggs*
h	hɑs the sound in *house*
ḥ	sounds like ɑn “h” mɑde deep in the throɑt like when breɑthing on glɑsses to cleɑn them
i	sounds like the “i” in *it*
ii	sounds like ɑ long “e,” ɑs in *greed*
k	sounds like the “k” in *kite*
kʷ	sounds like the “qu” in *quick*
k̓	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “k” but pronounced forcefully
k̓ʷ	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “qu” but pronounced forcefully
ɬ	the bɑrred “l,” ɑ hissed version of “l,” resembling the English “th” sound
ƛ	the bɑrred lɑmbdɑ, sounds like “tl”
ƛ̓	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “tl” but pronounced forcefully
m	sounds like the “m” in *mother*
m̓	ɑ glottɑlized sound, like “m” but pronounced forcefully
n	sounds like the “n” in *nose*