

Tying the Liis: The Connection of the Haida to Ancestral Belongings in Museums

Sdahl K'awaas Lucy Bell, Haida Nation

Simon Fraser University

PhD Candidate, Independent Interdisciplinary
Department (Indigenous Museology)



In Haida culture, we have a concept of an invisible *liis* (string). It ties us to our mothers and all the mothers before her. It also ties us to Haida Gwaii. I believe there is a *liis* connecting us to our Ancestors' 12,000 belongings in museums. My research goal is to strengthen the *liis* connecting us to our Haida belongings. I aim to tell the story of Haida museology, to support the Haida control and return of Haida belongings; and to show the Haida way of bringing reconciliation to the heritage sector.

I will combine my traditional practice with my academic learning. My research is situated in *yahgudang* (respect) *kangang* (responsibility) *yahk'ii* (to tell the truth) and *tla yahda* (to make things right). I use a blended theoretical and action-based approach, including grounded theory, auto-ethnography, and participatory action, to conduct qualitative community-based interviews, literature review, and archival research in a Haida way.

The Haida community not only guides my research but is actively involved in my research journey. It is important to me that they feel involved and see and hear themselves in my research.

I call upon *Jaad ahl K'iiganaa* (Story Woman) to bring stories and experiences to life in my dissertation. I aim for my research to be meaningful and accessible for the Haida and Indigenous communities and for academic and museum audiences.

I honour the Haida community and our *Kuniisii* (Ancestors) by telling our story.