



XWÉMALHKWU
HERO
STORIES

A GRAPHIC
NOVEL

BY
VALEN ONSTINE,
ALINA PETE,
& GORD HILL

EDITOR
TCHADAS LEO

X W É M A L H K W U H E R O S T O R I E S

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Printed by

Island Blue: Printorium Bookworks

911 Fort St, Victoria, B.C. Canada V8V 3K3

<https://printoriumbookworks.islandblue.com/>

First edition, November 2024

ISBN: 978-1-0689410-0-9

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Original Cover Art © Alina Pete

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NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

As a member of the Xwémalhkwu First Nation, it gives me great pride to be a part of this historic and modern take on how our nation is investing in the preservation and resilience of our culture, language and heritage. It is the duty of descendants of elders to preserve, retain and elevate the stories that they have gifted us.

Thanks to the artists, partners and funders of this project, this novel will be a resource to educate and inspire youth in the community to learn some of the historic and heartfelt stories from their direct relatives.

These stories are documented through Elders' recordings and a subsequent podcast, as a source of knowledge to the community at large.

When I was approached by Education without Borders Canada to help develop this novel you are about to read, I was nervous to accept this role in fear of not knowing how to manage such an important piece of work for my community. Thanks to the reassurance from all those involved in this project, the significance of this novel to preserve our history far succeeds any self doubt that I experienced.

As you go through each artist's rendition of these sacred Elder stories, I hope you feel the tone of our knowledgeable Elders through each individual character along with their dialogue.

?imot

Tchadas Leo

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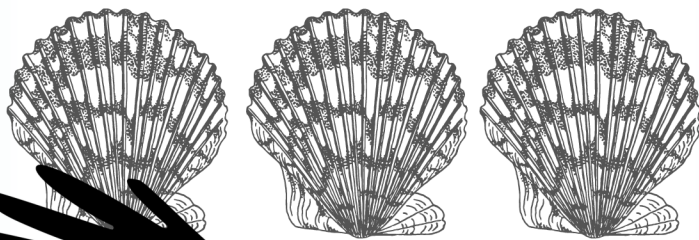
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Emote

All proceeds directly support Homalco First Nation's language and cultural programs.

CANOE & CLAM



WHERE THE
STORY STARTS



Tin nanat, the t'agəm is high
and the qaye is low.
And in this nux^wεƛ, a qəmqəm
makes their way to some of the very
oldest xaʔa gardens of
ʔems hēhaw

K^wijεm shining, the t'agəm leads the way.
Her light reflects off of the rippling water
illuminating the edges of the island tree lines.

The nux^wεƛ is carved from the same beautiful
taxəmay that catch the moonlight, nestled
together among the pixay and spruce.

The taxəmay was dried for a long time
before the boat met the water,
tightening the fibers to help the craft
float well and keep water out.

Ten pullers $\lambda\text{as}\text{ə}\text{m}$, the $\text{qayimix}^{\text{w}}$ follows pathways that have been voyaged by $\text{?əms h}\text{ə}\text{haw}$ and neighbours since time immemorial.

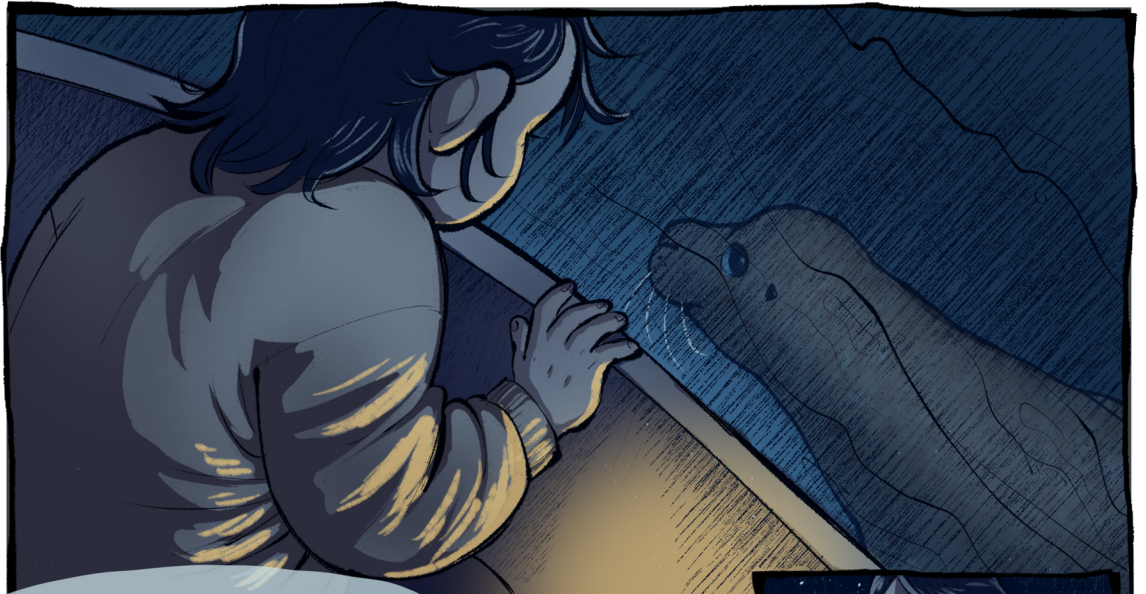
A finish of $\text{?asx}^{\text{w}}\text{ʊ}\text{t}\text{t}\text{ə}\text{n}$ on the bottom makes the boat fast —

gliding easily through the water

just like the ?asx^{w} below.

This is the first time the $\text{nux}^{\text{w}}\text{ε}\text{t}$ is on the water

And the littlest one's first time $\text{?ə?ə}\text{t}\text{q}^{\text{w}}\text{ə t}\text{ə nux}^{\text{w}}\text{ε}\text{t}$.



šuošam, Little One!



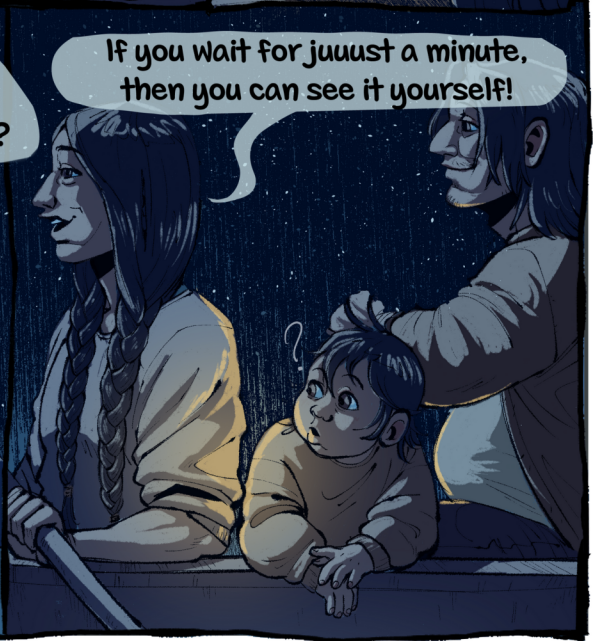
Hm?



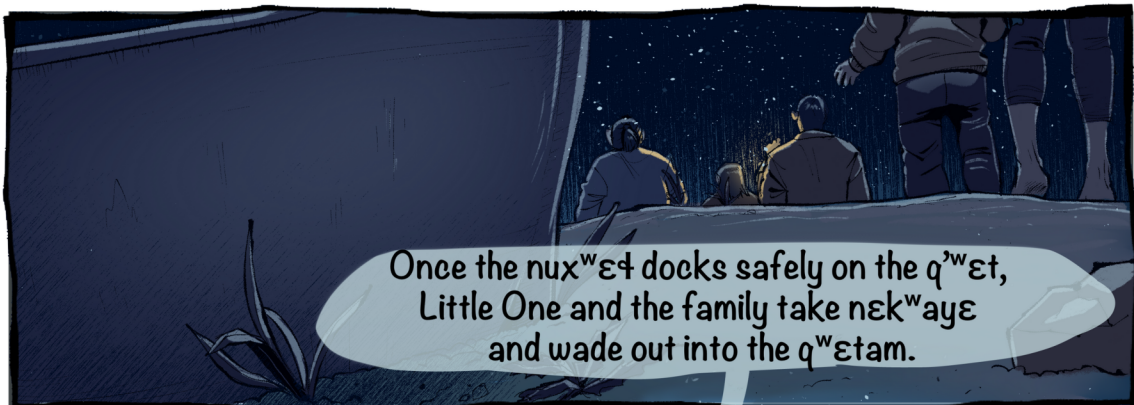
We made it taut!



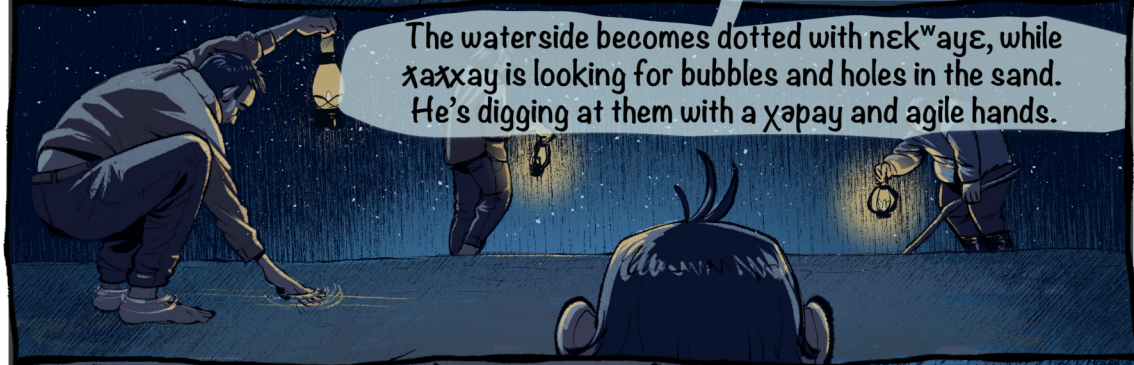
We did??
Can you lift me
up so I can see it?



If you wait for juuust a minute,
then you can see it yourself!



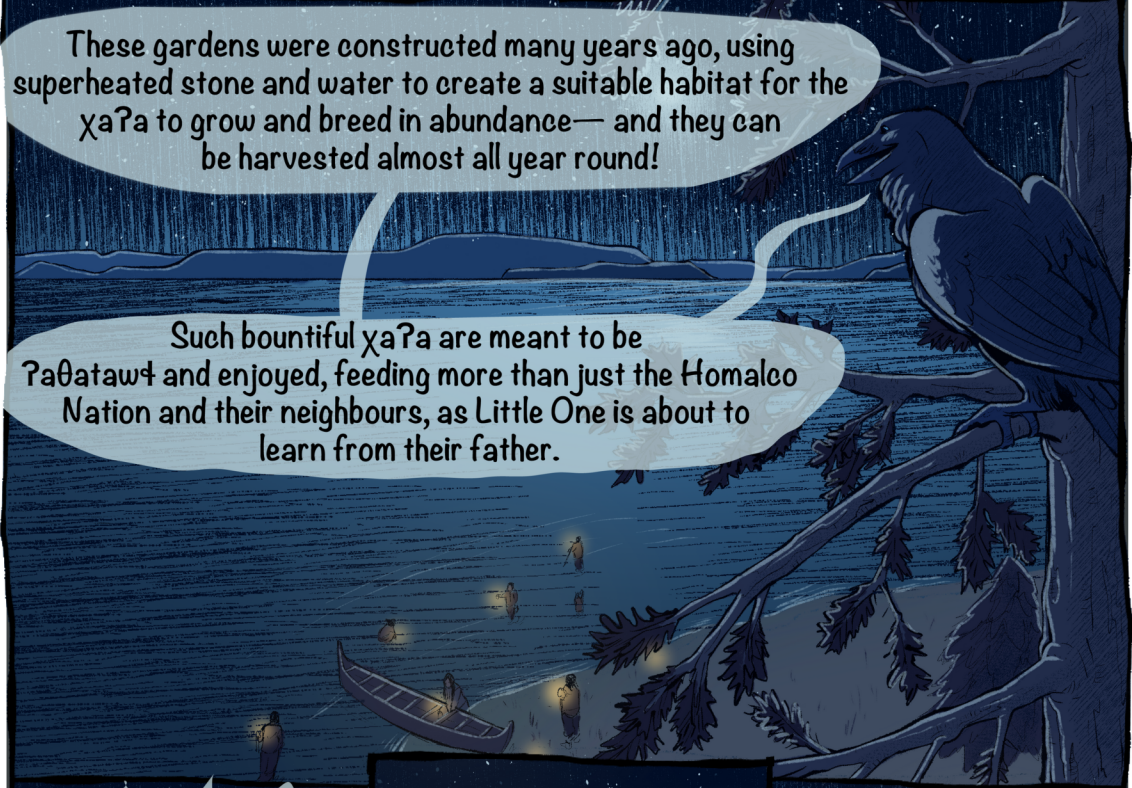
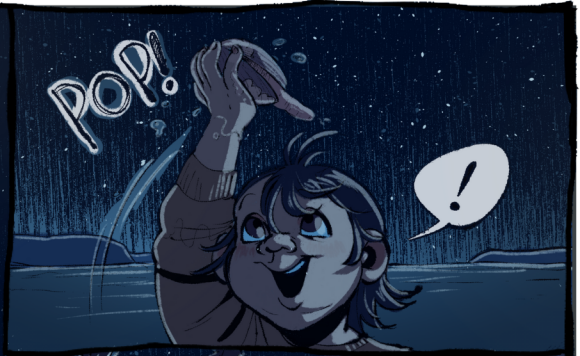
Once the nux^wε† docks safely on the q^wε†, Little One and the family take nek^waye and wade out into the q^wε†am.



The waterside becomes dotted with nek^waye, while χαχχay is looking for bubbles and holes in the sand. He's digging at them with a χαpay and agile hands.



It might seem easy, but ο?ο†q^wο is very hard work! It is many hours of hunching over and digging through wet, heavy sand in soggy clothes, heaving around qaxmot χα?a.



These gardens were constructed many years ago, using superheated stone and water to create a suitable habitat for the xa?a to grow and breed in abundance— and they can be harvested almost all year round!

Such bountiful xa?a are meant to be ?a?ataw? and enjoyed, feeding more than just the Homalco Nation and their neighbours, as Little One is about to learn from their father.




xa?a!!!
I DID IT! I FOUND ONE!!



Heey, thats a really big xa?a! ?imot papem Little One. Is that your first catch??







Wanna toss it into the k^wawis and find even more of them for me??




hēhēw qaxmot xaʔa ??




Now, we're gonna take them back home and ʔaθatawʔ them among ʔət^o jēʔajē and ət^o qēmqēm



ḅāq preserves them, makes them tastier, and also makes them much easier to carry!




Some of them will be eaten fresh, and then we'll smoke the rest so that they can last a long time.



Then, once they're smoked, we load the xaʔa into our nux^wεʔ and take the χ^wεmatk^wu River inland and trade to our Tsilhqot'in friends for smoked moose meat!

gasp?



I love smoked moose!! I'm gonna find MORE xaʔa than anybody tin nanat!!!



Ha ha ha!

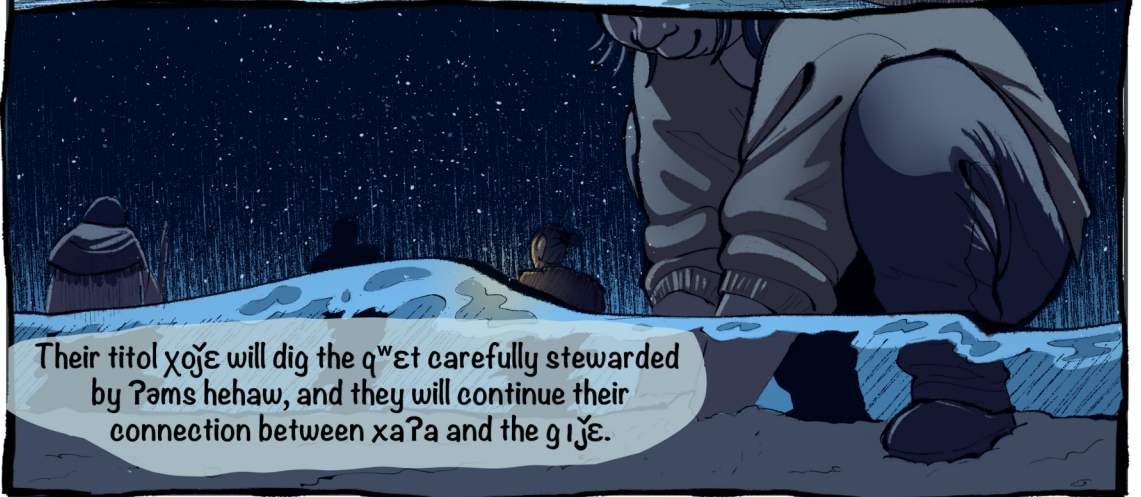
I'll definitely let them know where all the xaʔa came from!

The xʷemaʔkʷu and the Tsilhqot'in people have a long history together, trading food, language, and culture between them.

The journey is too long for the little one to make, but the grown up Homalco canoers are met warmly by qamqam and jeʔaje in the Tsilhqot'in giɛ. when they arrive to deliver their bounty.

With time, Little One will understand just how important these relationships are, and perhaps they'll visit the inland one day for themselves, once they've grown bigger and wiser.

For now though, they will experience their world through play, qaqsem and stories from xaxxaxay.

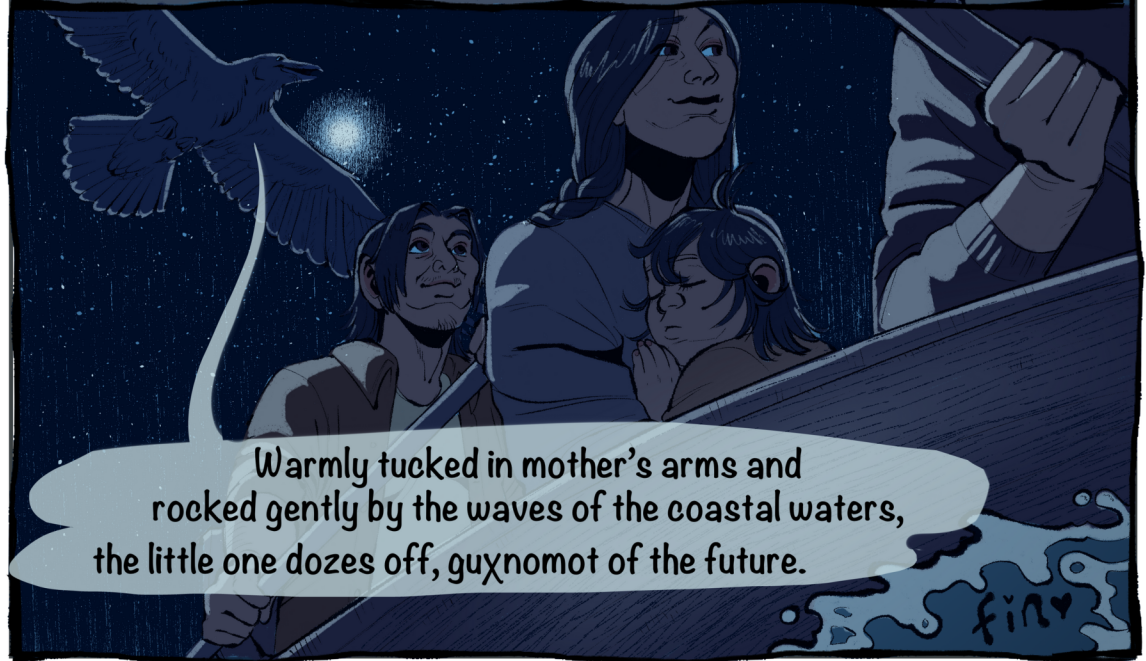


Their titol xojɛ will dig the qʷet carefully stewarded by ʔams hehaw, and they will continue their connection between xaʔa and the giɛ.



Eventually, the late night of enthusiastic ορτορωο tuckers the little one out, rubbing eyes with wet hands while χαχχαχ stretch their sore backs.

When they can't stand anymore, their mother lifts them gently to her chest. Her heart is full of love and pride, and their ρεϋραε are full of χαρα.



Warmly tucked in mother's arms and rocked gently by the waves of the coastal waters, the little one dozes off, guxnomot of the future.