

Title: Unification of Naasquisaqs and Tl'aakwakumlth

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Keywords: Native American, Hupacasath, Nuu-chah-nulth, Indigenous Fashion

Nuu-chah-nulth First Nations hail from the West coast of Vancouver Island and are a confederacy of 14 smaller sovereign nations. According to their traditional beliefs, they have occupied these territories since *iikmuut* (the time before time) and archaeological evidence from this region confirms occupation for at least 5000 years (McMillan 2000). Like other Northwest Coast indigenous peoples, Nuu-chah-nulth social organization is complex and reflected in design practice and iconography (Holm 2014; Jonaitis 2006). Families own crests, which are iconographic imagery that represent histories, rights, and privileges (Green 2014). Crests are displayed at potlatch ceremonies, events held to mark important life transitions like birth, coming-of-age, marriage, naming, and death (Sapir 1913). This design is as a bridal gown that will be worn at a potlatch marking the nuptials of Naasquisaqs, a highly ranked 64-year-old woman of the Hupacasath Nation, and Tl'aakwakumlth, a man in his 70s who hails from Kyuquot and Nuuchatlaht Nations and holds a *Ha'wilth* (chief) position in the latter. Nuu-chah-nulth marriages are typically exogamous and endogamous: exogamous in that marriages between different Nuu-chah-nulth nations are preferred, and endogamous in that the people marrying should be of the same social rank (Drucker 1951). Marriages are first and foremost about community- and nation-building, and in this case the nuptials will unify the Hupacasath First Nation of the Alberni Valley with the Kyuquot and Nuchatlaht nations of the Nuu-chah-nulth.

This wedding gown is a collaboration between a non-Native designer who has worked as an anthropologist in this community for the past decade, and a Native designer who is the Uncle of the bride. It incorporates traditional Northwest Coast *huulthin* (dance shawls) by sewing a asymmetrical, stylized shawl directly into a tailored sheath dress, thus transforming the traditional rectangular shawl shape. The anthropologist-designer has studied and published about *huulthin* (Green 2013), and worked closely with Naasquisaqs's family as an anthropologist since 2009. She was asked to construct the dress for three reasons: (1) her understanding of Nuu-chah-nulth social and aesthetic practices and Hupacasath history more specifically (Green & Chuuchkamalthnii 2010; Green 2011; Green 2013; Green 2016); (2) her skills as a clothing designer; and (3) her technical skills in textile surface design. The design concept revolves around the union of two individuals and two family-nations and therefore the visual impact, design cohesion, and aesthetics needed to demonstrate this. The anthropologist requested two crest images from her design collaborator to represent the unification: a whale's dorsal fin and a crest image representing a copper. The dorsal fin is a crest owned by Naasquisaqs that was passed down to her from her great-great-grandmother Puunii-ii, who was a *hakuum* (queen) and had the right to the dorsal fin of any whale caught in her territory (Green 2013: 194). The copper is a crest owned by the groom and his name, Tl'aakwakumlth, translates as "he is full of copper wealth." The geometric shape of the copper and its anthropomorphism is a common form in Northwest Coast art (Holm 2014). The images were rendered on silk using a Jacquard brand metallic water-based resist for the copper, Dye-na-flo silk paint for the black, and antique Reckitt's Crown Laundry Bluing for the blue. The latter was selected and made into a silk paint because Nuu-chah-nulth peoples adopted Reckitt's as a painting pigment in the 19th century when it became available through trade; therefore, many important historical masks, headdresses, rattles, and other ceremonial artifacts have been painted with this pigment and it was important to acknowledge this history while simultaneously achieving an accurate blue (Townsend-Gault & Chuuchkamalthnii 2010: 23).

The greatest challenge in creating this custom gown was to design from many miles apart and yet ensure good fit. The anthropologist does not live on Vancouver Island and is a full-time university professor, while Naasquisaqs lives and works full-time on Vancouver Island. Fit was of great concern because Nuu-chah-nulth bodies tend to be relatively short in stature with broad chests, a body shape not accurately reflected in typical dress forms. To address this challenge new technologies and patternmaking approaches were used. Naasquisaqs traveled to the anthropologist's university for a 4-day period over a long weekend and was body scanned. The body scan (Figure 1) was reduced to half-scale, and a dress form was manufactured using a technique in which cross-sections of the body scan are sliced and cut from ¼" foam on a laser cutter (Figure 2), then registered and stacked on dowels and

covered with jersey knit fabric (Ashdown & Phoenix 2016). After the half-scale was completed, a basic sloper was draped on the form, digitized in Optitex and brought to full scale, and then a basic muslin was created for fitting on Naasquisaqs (Figure 3). As with previous research on custom half-scale, very few fit issues presented themselves during the fitting, which ensured the accuracy of the half-scale form (Ashdown & Phoenix 2016). Naasquisaqs then returned home, and the anthropologist began work draping the design on the custom half-scale form.

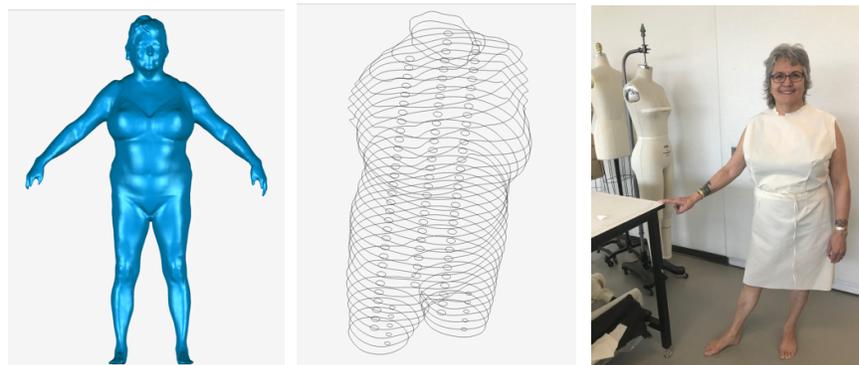


Figure 1 (left): Body scan of Naasquisaqs. **Figure 2** (center): Cross-sections of body scan and dowel registration marks for half-scale dress form production.

Figure 3 (far left): Naasquisaqs in basic sloper muslin developed from custom half-scale form.

A very basic, fitted, princess-line sheath dress was designed as an undergarment with a central panel on the grain where the copper icon would later be painted. The dress was designed to be floor-length, with a kick-pleat at center back, and a side zipper. Next, the asymmetrical shawl was draped over the foundation garment and matched to the sheath dress at the armholes, neckline, side seams, and shoulder seams. Fullness for this shawl was added to the wearer's right shoulder, which continued around the right side of the body and the backside (with fullness added from the same shoulder seam on the backside), and then fullness was reduced and hem shortened to meet at the side seam beneath the wearer's left armhole. The side zipper was strategically hidden beneath the fullness on the wearer's right side. Simple set-in short sleeves were designed to reach just past the mid-bicep, just shy of the elbow. The draped pieces were then patterned in half-scale and a muslin was produced and fitted to the custom half-scale dress form. Adjustments were made for fit and the patterns modified accordingly. The patterns were then digitized in Optitex, trued, enlarged to full-scale, and printed on a plotter. Two different silk final fabrics were selected: a silk dupioni for the sheath dress (selected for its relative sturdiness) and a 19.5mm silk charmeuse for the draped portion (selected for its softer drape). The pattern pieces were then cut, stay-stitched, and serged. The pieces were pinned to a wall in the apparel studio and an overhead projector was used to project the crest images onto the pattern pieces, which were then traced with a disappearing ink pen. Before constructing the garment, the individual pattern pieces were painted and dyed after mounting on a large wooden frame. As previously mentioned, Dye-na-flo was used for black, Jacquard water-based metallic resist was used for the copper, and a dye was made from antique Reckitt's Crown Laundry Bluing, which was procured on eBay. After completing the silk painting, the garment was constructed. It has been photographed on a dress form because Naasquisaqs resides on Vancouver Island and was not able to travel the long distance to the anthropologist's university for photography. The gown will be worn for her wedding on June 30, 2018 at the Hupacasath House of Gathering in Port Alberni, British Columbia.

This creative design scholarship is the result of integrating ongoing ethnographic research, collaborative design practice, new technologies related to body-scanning and half-scale pattern development for custom design, and experiments in surface design techniques. The result acknowledges Nuu-chah-nulth histories and their ongoing cultural practices and iconography. This design also contributes to recent conversations on cultural appropriation by offering new possibilities and shows how collaborative ethnographic design research has the potential to create respectful cultural exchange and designed outcomes that honor and exemplify the cultures of origin.

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