



# Meet Cheyanne Hackett.

In 2015, Cheyanne Hackett enrolled in her first cultural boot camp. It was a two-week induction; part of her new job as a Homalco First Nation Wildlife tour guide in Orford. At the time, the 22-year old knew almost nothing about her Indigenous roots, though she had spent her entire life on the Homalco 9 Reserve in Campbell River.

“When we first performed for our community – after learning how to drum, sing and dance – there wasn’t a dry eye in the house. Everyone was so proud. I was amazed,” says Cheyanne, who admits to losing the motivation to retain her culture after her grandparents passed away when she was a child. “Learning my culture and working at Homalco has really helped ground me. It’s allowed me to grow my roots and better myself.”

Apart from discovering her cultural heritage, Cheyanne’s work with Homalco Wildlife Tours has allowed her to appreciate her other passions: nature and wildlife. From 2015 to 2017, the largely Indigenous-run company worked with a bear biologist to track grizzlies – a job the staff now does. Guides, like Cheyanne, give up to 10 tours daily during the bear season (August through October). Compared to when Homalco Wildlife Tours first started, in 2005, this is a two-fold increase.

“People obviously love seeing the bears and enjoy the guides, but they also want to know our stories and culture,” says Cheyanne, whose traditional name is ‘Clunn-Clunn Clawthumb’ or ‘Shywolf’, though her colleagues call her ‘NotSoShy’. “When they first arrive, we teach them greetings in Homalco, share some history and sing our Women’s Warrior song. During their tour, we go by eight carved signs written in our local language. Each represents different animals or plants. Every time we see a new sign, I repeat the word in Homalco. On the bus ride down, we do a little quiz. People love it! They want to learn about our land.”

Future plans for Cheyanne remain tied to nature, wildlife and culture. Her work with Homalco has inspired her to start her own visitor operation one day with her Navajo partner, a certified wilderness guide, and their two-year old daughter.

“I’ve always wanted this to be my work. It has helped me learn more about who I am and where I come from. I feel honored to pass this on.”

A Community Story from the Homalco First Nation

## Enhancing Indigenous Tourism Infrastructure