Report 2: Winds[1]
2026 October

1. Introduction. This is a report by the Wordshare Project. We share words and translations in the Nuuchahnulth and Ditidaht languages in order to help build our community of speakers and restore our languages. We agree on words for modern concepts, supporting the integrity of each dialect, based on information from our elders and other sources.[2, 3]

2. Language. Traditional sea-level navigation relies on the winds, and on local landmarks that are visible from a canoe. But Westcoast languages have also adapted to map-level navigation, which relies on the chart and the compass. This report does not deal with the complexities of local navigation systems. Rather, its purpose is to agree on translations for the compass points north, east, south, and west, so that we can discuss them without using English.[4, 5, 6]

(1)	yooʔtiʔ D, BA yuuʔati, L yuuʔatu, HTQ yuḥtiił	north to northeast wind blowing
(2)	tuc̓iʔ D, N tuc̓ii	east to southeast wind blowing
(3)	t̓aqʔaa D, N t̓aqsiił	south to southwest wind blowing
(4)	hačłii D, N hačłiiƛ	west to northwest wind blowing

To be clear, the words in (1)–(4) do not replace local names for winds. Rather, they translate the compass directions into Westcoast languages. The following passages show that translations between winds and directions have been conventionalized for at least a hundred years.[7]

(5) histaatukweʔinʔaała ʔuyi ʔiiḥẇit̓asʔaƛquu tuc̓ii. ‘They say it always sounds there before a big east wind.’ (SY, ST51) • (6) ʔanič ʔuyimtʔaała wiḥiiʔa k̓ʷak̓ʷaƛ ʔuyi ʔiiḥʔaƛquu hačłiiƛ... ‘They say the sea otter were always on land during a big west wind...’ (SY, ST51) • (7) histaatuk̓ʷap̓aƛ ʔaḥʔaa ƛułaatukʔiċap̓aƛ ʔuyi yuuʔatiqapiẇit̓asʔiċaƛquu ʔuyi. ‘It sounds small and good when there will be a gentle north wind.’ (SY, ST51)

In the rest of this report, we explain how to use wind words to refer to directions, and clear up some common points of confusion around these words. To begin with, English terms like *north wind* describe the direction that the wind comes from, not where it goes.

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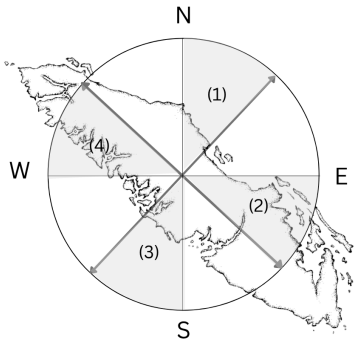
[1] (CC BY 4.0) 2026 Wordshare Project
[2] For more information about the Wordshare Project, see tashii-texela.org/translation.
[3] Wordshare reports represent consensus, but are living documents, and revised as needed.
[4] Dialect codes. A: Ahousaht; B: Barkley Sound; C: Central (Tla-o-qui-aht, Ahousaht, Hesquiaht); D: Ditidaht-Pacheedaht; E: East Barkley Sound (Huu-ay-aht, Hupacasath, Tseshaht, Uchucklesaht); H: Hesquiaht; I: Ehattesaht-Nuchatlaht; L: Tla-o-qui-aht; M: Makah; M: Mowachaht-Muchalaht; N: all Nuuchahnulth; T: Northern (Mowachaht-Muchalaht, Nuchatlaht, Ehattesaht-Chinehkint); Q: Kyuquot-Checleseht; W: West Barkley Sound (Toquaht, Ucluelet).
[5] Some sources write N *yuḥtiił*, *t̓aqsiił* with a glottal stop and an extra syllable, that is |yuḥtiiʔił|, |t̓aqsiiʔił|. We surmise that the latter spellings go back to typos in the Taataaqsapa dictionary (TD: 173).
[6] See B4 20260419 for MDN data and discussion.
[7] Two-character codes (ex. B4, ST, SY, TD, WW) cite fluent speakers and other sources.

Further, Westcoast wind words are verbs describing winds, not nouns describing directions. For example, D *tuc̓i?* means that a wind is blowing from the east (or southeast). It does not mean ‘east’. To make a direction word, add the suffix D *–cpaː*, N *–cpaˑ* ‘side’ to a wind word. For example, D *tuc̓?icpaa* means ‘east wind side’, that is ‘east’. The story in (8) gives another example, where N *ƛ̓aqsiiɬ* ‘south wind blowing’ plus *–cpaˑ* makes *ƛ̓aqsiiɬcpa* ‘south’.

(8) N ʔayaqḥweʔin ʔuyuʔał hihič̓aʔa hisimʔas peenkuupa ṅupčiił ʔuyi. wiiy̓aat ʔayimsʔat ṅačuʔałʔat ʔaḥkuu hiłqin ƛ̓aqsiiɬcpa. ‘Many in the Vancouver area saw the Northern Lights on Monday. It is rare to see them as far south as we are.’ (WW21)

Why do wind words refer to a range of directions, like ‘east to southeast’? This is so, first, because they are defined with respect to the coast of Vancouver Island. Second, they vary according to local landmarks, rather than following an absolute frame of reference like the compass. Third, map-level navigation has pulled their reference counterclockwise. As a result, each wind word covers roughly forty-five degrees of the compass.

(9)



Do wind words have meanings? As far as we know, the names of the east and west winds are so old that their original meanings are lost. Words for the north wind are based on √*yu–* ‘wind’. The suffix *H–ʔatu* ‘go underwater’ in *yuuʔatu*, *yooʔtiʔ*, *yuuʔati* might mean that the north wind goes towards the ocean. Words for the south wind are based on √*ƛ̓aq–* ‘same again’, perhaps because it complements the north wind. We cannot explain the suffixes *–ḥtiił*, *–siił*, *–ʔaa*.[8]

3. Endorsements. This report is endorsed by the huuʕiiʔatḥ ḥaẇiiḥ, Language Keepers Society, Tashii-Texela Language Society, Toquaht First Nation, and the Yuułuʔiłʔatḥ Language Team.

[8] Sources disagree concerning whether words for the south wind are based on the root √*ƛ̓aq–* ‘same again’ or √*tak–* ‘towards’. We follow the weight of evidence in favouring √*ƛ̓aq–* (B4 20260419).