



Syilx Language House

Annual General Report May, 2022 to November 9, 2023

Message from our E.D. S?ímla?x^w

We create advanced speakers, grounded in cultural wisdom, creativity, humour, kindness, and professionalism. We are thrilled to report on our successes and challenges for our Annual General meeting, November 9, 2023. We follow the science to turn around a situation created by hundreds of years of trauma. We believe we deliver more adult immersion hours, following a results-based curriculum, than *any* program in North America. Is it a big challenge? *Kiwa*, Yes it is. Is it worth it? *Kiw*. Please read on for Syilx Language House's mission, stories, a typical week, our year in a nutshell, our financial picture, and our Vision.

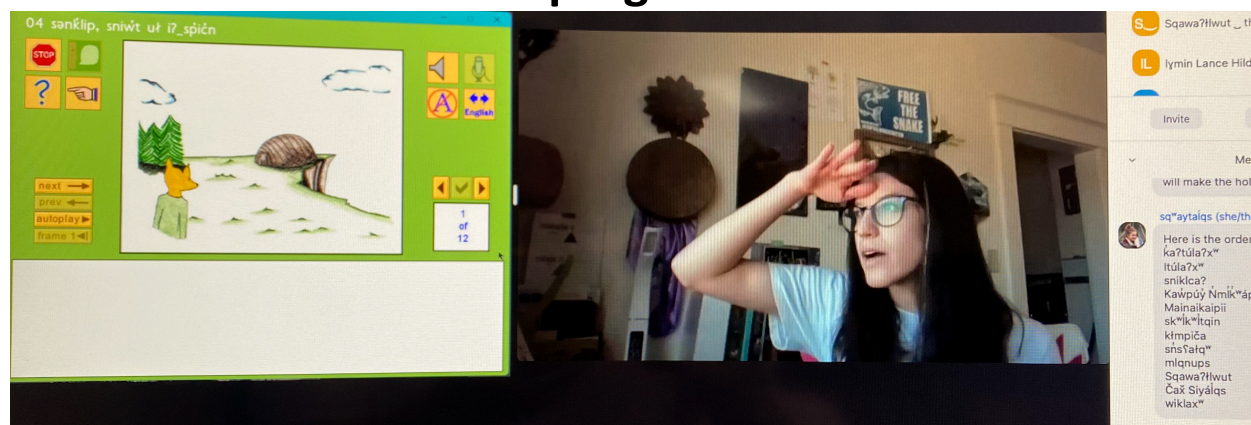


Our Mission

Our mission is to create new advanced speakers, record and share Elder recordings, and to foster positivity and wellbeing through language work. We strive to be the safest, wisest, most inclusive Indigenous language organization, grounded in cultural values. We follow our partner organization, the Salish School of Spokane, in implementing results-based pedagogy, institutional kindness, inclusivity and leading from within. *2023 grad class, below, March 25, 2023.*



Our Stories – within the program



“This program has been transformational. It is connecting me to parts of myself that I didn’t realize were missing.” (1st year student Sqawáłlwut Alexis Tonasket, storytelling above)

Sqawáłlwut Alexis Tonasket (above) began the program as a beginner in May 2022, graduating with the one-year cohort in August 2023, presenting an entire Čaptíkʷl 2 story from memory. Now, as of November 2023, Sqawáłlwut is a full-time teacher, teaching the new one-year cohort, supporting new students in immersion, and transcribing Elders. A success story.

On a personal level, connecting to our culture through language study is empowering, beautiful, creative, transformational. The program creates a safe zone of inclusivity, and strengthens us through the process of hard work and deep values. The language itself is beautiful, complex, enriching, and the stories and knowledge are powerful and connect us to the landscape and culture. The stories place us as Indigenous people, on our land within our community (see field trip photo, Spotted Lake, right). Our program builds speaking ability in all participants. A small number of graduates are hired each year to teach the next one-year cohort, and work on transcriptions, an enriched full-time domain of fluency building. **Recordings and transcriptions** are published each year. We are thrilled to host a **Book launch** of our ninth volume. Eighteen hours of narratives (78 stories) in full Nsyilxč̓n will be publicly shared in *Elders 9* on Dec. 1, 2023, at Okanagan College, Vernon, as well as re-release of *Elders 1*.



A typical week in the ḥqłxʷčnłxʷ

19 students joined the beginner program this year, meeting 9am to noon on zoom, in a dynamic immersion space, 440 hours per year. 9 returning students are in the intermediate program, 260 hours per year. Lateral kindness instruction and cultural teachings from a fluent Elder each month, and five field trips per year, also zoomed.

Low-advanced students meet 1-3pm on zoom, learning Ḥsyilxčn 3, the fifth text in the Salish



Curriculum. Once a year we offer a six-week beginner evening N1, taught by learners, currently taught by Mlqnups to ten hockey players at OKIB. We teach N1 at Okanagan College in Kelowna, Selkirk College in Castlegar, and a local Indigenous daycare in Westbank. Meanwhile, staff work diligently in the background to administer assessments, marks, stipends, manage funding, communications, transcriptions, organize events, and Elder recordings (see photo above of Lymin & Sʔimlaʔxʷ recording with Herman Edward). Staff attend community events, ceremony, and Ḥsyilxčn sign projects (see photo left).

Weekly Schedule Sept. 2023-June 2024

TIME	Mon	Mon Tues	Tues Wed	Wed Thur	Thur	Fri	Notes
9-9:30	Yr 1	Yr 1	Tr. Yr 1	Yr 1			All staff attend co-share/lateral kindness/field trip Thursdays
9:30-10	Sqa/Snsa	Sqa/Snsa	Sqa/Snsa	Sqa/Snsa			Mon. 10am N3 Office hour (Sim)
10:10:30	Mlqnups	Sim Mlqnups	Mlqnups	Mlqnups			Transcription Tuesdays Tues.3h 9am-12pm
10:30-10:45	BREAK	N3 BREAK	BREAK	BREAK	field		
10:45-11		Hr			trips		Thurs 11-1:50 Sim & Sns teach FNIL 110 rm C234, meet Sts immersion lunch 2:15
11-11:30		AD. Sim after		Ly. Sim&Sn	all		Mon. 11am admin meeting (Sim, Stsaqwm, Lymin)
11:30-12		mtg break		FNIL 110	day		Wed. am: Lymin supported grammar prep for Xwačú & Stsaqwm N3
12-1:00	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH	LUNCH			
1-1:30		Ly. Yr 2	Yr 2	Yr 2			Mon. pm: Lymin N3 office hr (Mon 1-1:30) for Snsalqw & Sqawalwut
1:30-2:00		staff C2/N3	C2-N3	Sim C2/N3	Yr 1 &		Mon. 1:30 STAFF MEETING 1:30-2:30pm - all staff
2-2:30		mtg		Lym	Yr 2		Wed. 1:30 Sim & Lymin time - edit/transcribe Elders 10
2-3:00		Sim	Sts/Xwa	Lymin			
3:00-4:30	N1 office hr Stsaqwm		N1 office hr Xwačú				
5:30-6		N1pm		N1 pm			
6-6:30		Mlqnups		Mlqnups			
6:30-7		Snik'lc'a		Snik'lc'a			
7-7:45							
7:30-8							

Our Stories - within BC

This summer we were invited to present at the First Peoples Culture Council Conference with Salish School of Spokane (see photo, right). More languages are adopting the Salish curriculum to counteract the fact that in North America, most languages are failing at the goal of true fluency due to mismatched activities, including not following a fluency transfer system. Advanced proficiency is *not* impossible. What is needed is for a group of adults to

push through the curriculum and then decide, like the Hawaiians, to form a full-time language domain for themselves and their children. It is possible. We are truly lucky to have the N'syilxčn Curriculum and Salish School as role models. The Curriculum is a series of 12 comprehensive textbooks from beginner to advanced (N1, Č1, N2, Č2. . .), that take 2,000 hours to deliver. Textbooks, audio, software, teaching materials (free at interiorsalish.com), and a delivery method were all recorded with a fluent elder, Sšam'tiča?. The proven method has been adopted by 12 languages across North America, including a strong group of Tlingit in Whitehorse, Yukon.



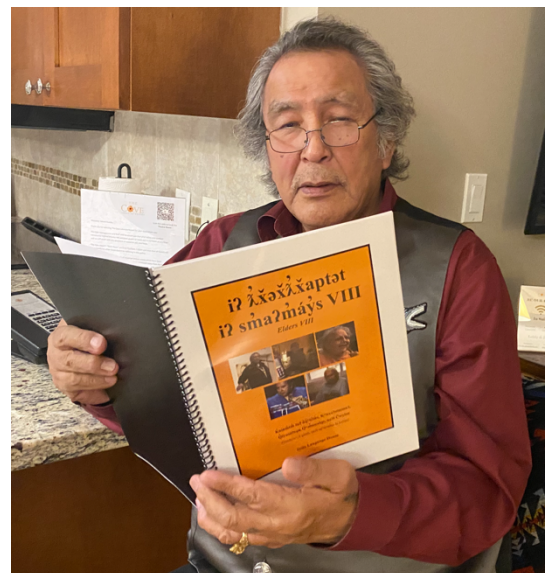
Our year in a nutshell

Elders 9 Book launch Dec. 1, 2023, & Re-release of *Elders 1* with full transcriptions. Annually each Fall/Winter we share 100+ recordings, 20+ hours of audio, shared freely (Grouse Barnes, fluent Elder, reading *Elders 8*, right).

May 2022: 18 students started the one-year intensive zoom program at N1, signed student contracts, on zoom 9am to noon, Monday to Thursday, 12 hours a week, receive instruction in N1, C1, N2, and C2. 420 hours/year.

June 2022: E.D. paddled in Columbia Canoe Journey with Sinixt paddlers, praying for the return of language and salmon.

August break: Much needed downtime. E.D. walked the Camino Norte in Spain.



September 2022: one-year intensive continued at C1, Story 5.

October 2022: Our four staff members, graduates of the one-year program, start studying N3 in the afternoons, 6 hours a week. 210 hours/year.

Oct 2022 was a big month: field trip to spotted lake, C2 oral presentations, BGCO sign unveiling. March 2023: staff attend Celebrating Salish Conference in Spokane WA.

March 25 2023: Graduation gala for Year-one cohort in Westbank BC (photo, first page). Instructors and fluent Elder blanketed (photo, right).

April-Aug 2023: one-year cohort extension added 200 hours.

August break: E.D. presented at two international conferences, Los Angeles CA, Nanaimo BC, and biked in BC.



September 2023: 19 students start one-year intensive program (photo, right).

September 2023: 6 returning students, 2 new students and 4 staff start the 2nd-year program, N3, 6 hours a week 1-3pm. 210 hours/year. *A huge win* that our intermediate program has so many returning students.

N1 presentations Nov 8.



November 9, 2023: Annual General Meeting with this Annual General Report.

December 1, 2023: Elders 9 Book Launch event, and www.thelanguagehouse.ca.

March 2024: Celebrating Salish Conference in Spokane WA.

June 14, 2024: Graduation Celebration, 1st-year and 2nd-year cohorts, Kelowna BC.

June 2024: Columbia Canoe Journey, and Salmon Ceremony Kettle Falls WA.

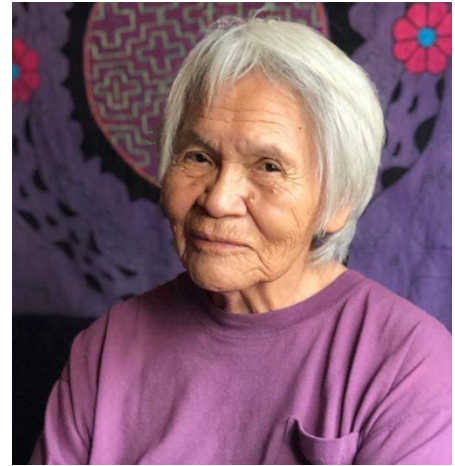
September 2024: start the seasonal round all over again. Quarterly board meetings.

Our financial picture

All learners are paid \$22-25+/hour to attend or teach. 80% of our funding goes to wages; at the moment, 29 learners including teachers. The other 20% goes to Elders, consultants, overhead and expenses. We are proud to be one of a pilot group of fundees of the First Peoples Culture Council ILP grant and grateful for their continued trust and support. We are proud to be the first ever non profit organization awarded the full five year funding from National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund (renamed Future Generations Fund). Our funding creates a transformative language pathway.

Vision for the future

Our graduates will become leaders in the language revolution, part of a larger movement of Salish language and culture rising. Full fluency will be achieved once a full-time language domain is achieved. This means a school, college, or another full time workplace in full immersion, like the Salish School of Spokane (see photo of our mentor Sʔam̓tícaʔ, right). This is the vision. Challenges include overcoming lateral violence, a result of the intergenerational traumas of genocide, linguicide, and colonization, tensions, gatekeeping, and internalized oppression of our own people and programs. Goalposts are creating 10-15 new speakers each year, and connecting them to the Salish revival (see Salish Canoe Journey photo, below).



*We train ourselves to practice lateral kindness and step into the light
The language is medicine
We have the right to speak our languages*

way' liṁlṁt thank you,

Sʔimlaʔxw

Sʔimlaʔxw Michele Johnson PhD
Executive Director, Syilx Language House



SLH - ṁqilxwčhiltxw - ṁýčáyp kʷu səčkwítmiʔstx miʔ qṭnuṁtm̓ - we put in our best effort to succeed