



# Annual General Report

## Syilx Language House

### Oct 26, 2021

Year 6: July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021  
& to 6<sup>th</sup> AGM October 26, 2021

**Mission:** SLH is a non-profit society to create new Ḥsyilxčh (Okanagan) speakers in Syilx communities. We promote the use, preservation, and revitalization of Ḥsyilxčh by running immersion classes, training teachers, recording Elders, publishing language materials, supporting an active family of learners and speakers, and raising the profile of Ḥsyilxčh.

**The things we focus on:** stay on top of the research, create speakers, record fluent Elders, practice lateral kindness and inclusivity following our ancestors, standing on the shoulders of giants.

**Photos:** Lower Left New SLH hires, August 2020 L to R: Skəkḥxísaʔt (instructor), Swʕaʔ (instructor), ǰaʔčnítkʷ (teacher), Səxʷʕaʔhčút (ECEA, nest), Kʷkʷlaí (ECE, nest). The three on the left taught all the way through N2 and ǰaʔčnítkʷ is continuing in N3. Upper Left: Fluent Elder recording session, 2016. Upper Right: a day in the outdoor immersion nest July 2020. Lower Right: SLH Adult fluency program laughing on zoom with Grouse Barnes, WFN fluent Elder, Oct 2021.



# E.D. Report on Year 6

Sʔímlaʔx<sup>w</sup> Michele Johnson PhD

October 31, 2021

Welcome to our sixth report, prepared for our 6<sup>th</sup> AGM. I have learned so much in six years of fluency delivery and I bring the teachings forward each year. This report contains a public record of our accomplishments and challenges. My team and I owe everything to the support of a great team, and standing on the shoulders of teachers and ancestors before us. **Report Timeline:** 6<sup>th</sup> year of operation, July 1, 2020 to 'year-end' June 30, 2021. Additional notes July 1 to date of AGM, Oct. 26, 2021. Previous AGM was Jan. 19, 2021. This report is very detailed; please focus in particular on the *highlights and the year in a nutshell*.  
Sʔímlaʔx<sup>w</sup> Oct. 31, 2021

## Contents

1. Staying on top of the research; reporting & conferences
2. Creating speakers; students & history
3. Recording Elders
4. The year in a nutshell; Overview of Year 6; Overview of Year 7
5. Domains of Use: 2020 Plan; Schools with Rachel Ritchot; Language Nest; TKTX Partnership
6. Partnerships
7. Recommendations
8. Financial summary

## 1. Staying on top of the research

*Why do we do what we do? Because we believe in language. We believe in fluency, and that real fluency (contrasted with partial fluency or simple exposure to language) will bring true healing to our minds, spirits and communities. We believe in professionalism and science-based methods of language learning. Our languages are our spirit and our history. They are healing. For our language to thrive, it is imperative to create a community of fluent parent-aged speakers, right now. Fluency for adults requires 2,000 hours. It also requires curriculum, literature, and finally, 'domains of use.'*

History of SLH and E.D.: Prior to helping create the SLH, Sʔímlaʔx<sup>w</sup> (Michele Johnson) completed four years of intensive PhD research in Indigenous language revitalization, focused on adult language acquisition, Indigenous second language teaching methods, and language assessment at UBCO, while studying at the Enowkin Centre. She partnered with four language sisters in the Chopaka Language House for one year, taught 2 hours a day by Sarah Peterson, and 4 hours a day by the Nsyilxcn Curriculum (Paul Creek/Salish School). She taught Nsyilxcn from the Curriculum for four years as a volunteer in people's homes, followed by two years at Enowkin, partnered with Syilx language giants Richard and Jeannette Armstrong. In 2015, she formed a non-profit association, the Syilx Language House, with the support of Syilx board members, as requested by community to create a language opportunity outside of existing institutions. She taught a four-year full-time in-person fluency cohort in Penticton through SLH, while simultaneously conducting two years of post-doc research through SFU. She believes in *praxis*: continually reflecting on and evolving knowledge to create the best results while honouring the realities of Indigenous community.

There are 64 Indigenous languages in Canada, and approximately 600 bands. All of these languages are declining, and most are critically endangered. It is a hidden fact that most language programs are not creating fluency. In fact, most language programs do not assess their results at all or follow the science of language

*nqilx<sup>w</sup>čnłx<sup>w</sup> SLH - niśáyp k<sup>w</sup>u səčkswítmi?st mi qłnuńtrń - we put in our best effort to succeed*

learning methods. Misinformation around language teaching is rampant in our critically endangered language programs; even our funders do not require adherence to successful methods. This is not through negligence or lack of will, but simply through lack of expertise, resources, curriculum, and training. College and university language programs deliver at most two to three hundred hours, usually not in immersion or with curriculum aimed at acquisition, and are hampered by the 40 hour credit system. Only three languages in Canada are creating fluency, delivering at least a one year (1000 hour) immersion program with publicly available assessed results greater than low intermediate: Mohawk (two communities), Squamish (Vancouver, SFU credited) and Nsyilxcn (the Nsyilxcn programs following the Salish Curriculum). We are proud to be one of these programs. It takes over 1,000 hours of sequenced, quality immersion, to create fluency in adults. SLH delivers 1,600 hours. It takes a fluent adult to create a fluent child. Fluency and bilingualism have great cognitive benefits for both children and adults. However, there is *no* research to indicate that partial fluency has these same benefits. Unfortunate high levels of dysfunction affect many, if not most, Indigenous organizations, institutions and language programs; what we call “politics” but is really emotional, reactionary, conflict-averse, bias-led, toxicity, what Bill Cohen calls the “politics of distraction.” We recognize these embedded patterns and train ourselves out of them. 10% of staff and class time are devoted to lateral kindness and non violent communication training. It is working. Research also shows that effective language teaching strives for optimum levels of language tension. It is critical for learners to be taught within their language levels. Mixed-level drop in classes do not create fluency. Curriculum is best delivered in a sequential manner, in immersion, by trained teachers within a supportive safe environment without fear of making mistakes. An additional factor for Indigenous learners is the need to deliver ongoing support to combat misinformation and lateral violence endemic to many programs. There are a number of tensions within our language community. This is not unique to the Syilx Nation. Every Indigenous language program experiences ongoing tensions. Our language has at most 24 remaining fluent Elders. The situation is critical. It is time to stop arguing and adopt proven methods.

*What is the Salish Curriculum? A proven adult fluency transfer system.* The Salish School of Spokane Curriculum and teaching method have created dozens of new speakers in the past decade, including a handful at SLH. The curriculum consists of a series of textbooks (and associated audio files, teaching imagery, lesson plans, computer software) Nsyilxcn 1, Čaptikwl 1, up to Nsyilxcn 4 and Čaptikwl 4, which take 1,600 hours to deliver. We affectionately refer to the texts as N1, C1, N2, C2, N3, C3, N4, C4. Read on to hear what SLH has accomplished in the past year, language gains, and organizational governance growth.

## Reporting & conferences

SLH is on track with reporting to community via newsletters, funders and partners, and conference presentations. Staff attend the Salish School of Spokane Symposium each year, usually as a keynote. SLH and TKTx Presented at the Celebrating Salish Conference in Spokane in person, March 2020, immediately prior to the first Covid lockdown. The team continue to learn invaluable information on how to deliver fluency, run a nest, and organizational governance from the leaders in Salish revitalization, Salish School of Spokane. Michele presented at the SSSOS Symposium July 22-23, 2021, as a keynote, and the Cultural Survival Conference as a keynote Oct. 5-7, 2021.

## 2. Creating Speakers

What does fluency mean? The research shows it means thousands of hours of scaffolded lessons, followed by immersion in a “language domain.” SLH has mastered the first step, and continually improves upon the second. Each staff receives on average ten hours a week of paid, sequenced immersion lessons, during their work. This year, we were thrilled to bring three FT staff from beginner to mid-intermediate speaking: Ká?čnítł<sup>w</sup> Rachel Ritchot (certified teacher), Skekmxísat Sofia Terbasket-Funmaker, and Stk’masq’t Skye Fay.

Evening class: 20 adults started in person and did a quick pivot during Covid to finish C1 over zoom, June 2020. They received N1 and C1 over the past year, 5.5 hours/week; total 200 hours. SLH hired bookkeeper Smxikn, and recording tech./T.A., Stsaqwm from the the evening cohort.

Staff N1 intensive: Two-week N1 idelivered to 3 new hires by 2 youth staff, August 2020 (photo pg 1); 60 hrs.

Adult staff fluency: Nov. 2020 - April, 2021, delivered 20 hours/wk to SLH/TKTX staff. N2 and C2 completed April 2021, with filmed presentations. N3 delivered to July 2021. The classroom immersion domain increased fluency, as did Elder recording work. Great efforts were made through the year to obtain licensing and a legal space for a nest, to support the immersion domain for the adults to thrive in their language.

1-year adult fluency cohort: This year, we followed research by Mohawk programs and created a one-year paid full time cohort. The learners are paid a stipend based on minimum wage, 14 hours/week, delivered over zoom. April 7, 2021, Day one of the one-year international cohort of learners. For the first three months we had four teachers, one TA and 14 learners. Two of our intrepid teachers left to return to university in the fall, to become a lawyer and a certified teacher. We wish them all the best and hope they will return when they have completed their studies. After a break for August, the cohort resumed in September 2021 with two full time teachers, Michele and Rachel. The TA is now a full time learner. As of October 15, 2021, there are ten learners, meeting 14 hours per week until April 2022, for a total of 550 hours. One day/month is dedicated to lateral kindness training and immersion with fluent Elders.

The Covid pandemic and shift to zoom created an opportunity to connect across borders and communities. We never thought we would say this but Covid is helping create fluency. It caused us to shut withdraw SLH's staff from the nest, and focus on what we could do over zoom, which turned out to be a fluency cohort. To be honest the fluency was not yet adequate to running a nest, resulting in overly high language tension.

Advanced N3 cohort (zoom): Started September 2021. Michele delivers N3 to one SLH staff (Rachel), 6 hours/week and three participants from Incheilium Washington who are thrilled to form an international cohort and receive free advanced training. The five advanced learners meet via zoom. This is an exciting partnership with Incheilium Language House (ILCA), and a huge win that is available to us because of the technology adopted during Covid. The table below shows the names and language (curriculum) levels attained by each staff member that reported to SLH over the 2020/21 reporting year (Curriculum goes N1, C1, N2, C2, N3, C3, N4, C4). N3 represents approximately 1,000 hours.

**FT learners who were direct reports to Michele within 2020/21 reporting year**

i? sk <sup>w</sup> ists	Certification	Employer	Curric. Level	Band	Age
Ķa?čnitk <sup>w</sup> Rachel Ritchot	Certified Teacher	SLH-current	N3	Lillooet	44
S?iřmla?x <sup>w</sup> Michele Johnson	PhD	SLH-current	N4	OKIB	53
Stsaqwm' Roz Wilson	BA	SLH-current	N2	N/A	36
Skəkrnxísa?t Sofia Terbasket Funmaker	B.A.	SLH-to Sept/21	N3	LSIB	24
Swřa? Kylie Jack	BA	SLH-to Sept/21	C1	PIB	25
Stkmasqt Skye Faye	Mom	SLH-to Sept/21	N3	UNB	31
Spəplína? Stephanie Alexis	Mom	SLH-summer/21	N1	OKIB	31
Sřa?q <sup>w</sup> álqs Hailey Causton	B.A./mom	TKTX-current	C2	LSIB	30
Səx <sup>w</sup> turńs Krista Lindley	Mom	TKTX-current	C2	OKIB	30
K <sup>w</sup> k <sup>w</sup> lal Deanna Cohen	Certified ECE	TKTX-current	C1	OKIB	40
Səx <sup>w</sup> řa?ńčút Alexis Tom	ECEA in training	TKTX-current	C1	WFN	23
Stkmasqt Skye Faye (shown twice)	Mom/volunteer	TKTX-current	N3	UNB	31

Year 7 New hires: Sept. 7, 2021, SLH hired PT supports Lymin Lance Hilderbrand and Sqwytalqs Angie Pinchbeck, out of the 1-year fluency cohort.

Assessment films are posted to the SLH Facebook page and our website. Assessment films were posted after the C2 oral exams April 1, 2021. The speaking ability was phenomenal after one short year. Filmed Oral exams and report cards are completed after each textbook. Students must retain 80% or repeat the course.

Team building/lateral kindness training: During the past year we had regular team building sessions, some led by Rachel Ritchot, to train the skills of professional communication and accepting others differences. Since April 2021, we have retained Kelly Terbasket to lead the group in regular team building/lateral kindness trainings.

### 3. Recording Elders

We partner with seven Fluent Elders. Each year we collect and publish Elders stories with our precious remaining fluent Elders, approximately five hours of audio each year. *Elders VII* was published and shared on social media and [thelanguagehouse.ca](http://thelanguagehouse.ca) July 2021. Hard copies are delivered to libraries, schools, and Bands. Fluent Elders visit the class on a regular basis (see title page, Grouse Barnes). Sessions are filmed and incorporated into *Elders VIII*.



K<sup>w</sup>uxástmína? Victor Antoine Elder, laughing while recording in 2019

SLH is now collecting *Elders VIII* recordings, using distance recording and microphones delivered to Elders. Levi Bent recorded and transcribed July 1 2019-June 30 2020, at which time FPCC mandated in-person Elder recording be discontinued and Levi was regretfully laid off. During his final month with SLH, Levi published a beautifully illustrated children's book in Nsyilxcn & English supported by FPCC.

# 4. The year in a nutshell

This year, our sixth of operation, has been a momentous year. The following two paragraphs are copied from Year 5 overview, where (as in this document) we gave a sneak peak of year 6.

*“SLH gained charitable status Oct 3, 2019, allowing us to apply for and receive new grants. SLH continues to successfully deliver the adult fluency program, community language lessons and Elder recordings. Many people have been supported to start and continue their language journey to fluency. This year SLH expanded its partnerships to assist a sister organization (TKTX) through its formation, run an immersion nest, while continuing to deliver adult fluency and record Elders. In the midst of this year, March 2020, all of Canada was changed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. The adult lessons ran exceptionally well over zoom, as did training and meetings. The nest program became an outdoor program and ran exceptionally well during this year.*

*Eight learners completed the first four-year adult fluency program in June 2019. From June, 2019 to July 1, 2020 SLH built a new team, delivered adult fluency, Elder recording, an evening community class, a toddler program, and assisted with creation and governance of our partner organization immersion nest, the Ti Kwu Ti Xilx Indigenous Association (TKTX). TKTX and SLH formed an immersion program for toddlers, run by Sʔimlaʔx<sup>w</sup> and Səx<sup>w</sup>tum̓s from October 2019 to July 1, 2020. It was an amazing experience to deliver outdoor immersion nest to toddlers and mothers. In the summer of 2020, SLH and TKTX partnered to hire three young adults to receive immersion training and deliver the nest. In September, 2020 there were 5 toddlers and 7 staff between SLH and TKTX. All received adult fluency training by SLH. In December 30, 2020 there were 4 full-time staff at SLH, 3 FT staff at TKTX, 2 PT volunteers at TKTX, and four toddlers. The four staff at SLH consist of one E.D., one principal, one assistant, and one mother. All are participating in the adult fluency program. The 3 staff at TKTX are one mother (E.D.), one ECE, and one assistant. The two volunteers at TKTX are two mothers. The four toddlers are children of the three mothers in the program. In November, 2020, with the administrative burden of running two organizations, and the necessity to form “bubbles” due to Covid, SLH and TKTX effected an administrative split. SLH delivered an increased number of adult hours (17 per week). The staff have gained an amazing degree of fluency. All four SLH staff studied C2 mornings and N2 afternoons (the third and fourth texts of the Salish Curriculum).”*

## Overview of Year 6 July-July 2021

July 1, 2020: Continuing full time nest 9am-3pm staff and toddler immersion with 2hr/day adult fluency

July 1, 2020: Continuing adult fluency 10hrs/week. All FT staff receive N2 & C2

July 2, 2020: final C1 zoom filmed presentations, adult evening class which ran through Covid over zoom

July 14, 2020: SLH Board Meeting (annual)

July 18, 19: SSOS Symposium. SLH presents and staff attend

July 31: team building day, all FT nest staff, paddleboarding

August 17: Hired Certified teacher Kaʔčnitk<sup>w</sup> Rachel Ritchot, Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and summer student Kylie Jack. New staff are taught 3 week N1 intensive in our newly rented basement location at Westbank First Nation. 3 week nest closure for toddlers.

Aug 28: team building & staff vision day, all FT nest staff, including TKTX mgt, mtn. biking on Myra trestles

Aug 31: 1 week staff orientation (TKTX mgt. unable to attend due to family responsibilities)

Sept 2020: New location & staff, nest soft start. 2 weeks half days, then full days. Outdoor nest

Sept 14: Adult fluency resumes 6hrs/week C2 after August break, while staff juggle toddlers

Sept 30: First FULL nest day 9am to 3pm. 2 moms, 4 toddlers, 6 staff. orange shirt day. Outdoors, indoors, naptime, activities. Adult delivery: C1 taught to ECE and assistant by Skekmx̓isat during naptime; C2 taught to staff by Michele, during afternoon nest activities which were monitored by ECE

Oct 14: Staqwalqs Hailey Causton returns from 3 month maternity leave with a 2 month infant, following 1yr university leave, to take up TKTX managerial & E.D duties in the midst of startup and new staff training month

*n̓qilx<sup>w</sup>čn̓it̓x<sup>w</sup> SLH - niʔáyp k<sup>w</sup>u səčkswítmiʔst mi q̓l̓nuñtr̓m̓ - we put in our best effort to succeed*

Oct 19-30: Responsible adult course & 1<sup>st</sup> aid training completed by all nest staff, moms & TKTX mgt.  
 Oct 29: all staff vision meeting led by Michele, after discussion with each team member individually to assess their level of commitment to immersion. Group decision to run nest in English, r.e. language and other tensions  
 Nov 1 (Sunday): Michele meets TKTX mgt. Staqwalqs and Sexwt'ums on zoom r.e. Covid & "bubbles"  
 Up until this date, the nest was running in-person with all FT staff rotating with toddlers, in a basement rental and outdoors. There were intermittent closures due to Covid, but we maintained the hours for the kids. Huge language gains were noted during this time for the FT staff working with kids, particularly Skek and Swa.  
 Nov 2: Covid "bubbles" formed. Michele is required to work from home, due to a surgery in the family. The nest in the rented basement is too tight for Covid; multiple staff days have been missed due to colds/Covid tests. It is clear a break is needed from in-person activities. SLH/TKTX split into two adult cohort "bubbles", TKTX mgt/moms/staff will conduct nest in their individual homes and zoom, with reduced immersion hours, without in-person support of Michele and other SLH staff. SLH offers continuing administration, mentorship, fundraising, and grant writing of FPCC Pathways grant for TKTX. SLH provides adult fluency over zoom. TKTX mgt express dissatisfaction with nest staff tensions they believe caused by SLH focus on immersion/fluency.  
 Nov 9: Adult fluency program increases to 17 hours/week. Michele teaches 2 SLH FT staff (Ka?čnitk<sup>w</sup> and Skekmsiat) and 1 TKTX mom (Stk'masq't), 3hrs C2 in am, 2 hrs N2 in afternoon, 4 days/week.  
 Nov 13-Dec, 2020: SLH teaches two TKTX staff (ECE & assistant) N1, 3 hours/week on Fridays  
 Jan-March 26, 2021: SLH teaches two TKTX staff C1; filmed final presentations March 26 with SLH  
 Jan 31-Feb 2, 2021: SLH hosts mediation meeting with TKTX at Sparkling Hills. TKTX attends via zoom  
 Feb 2, 2021: SLK & TKTX separate their administration, bookkeeping, continue to share adult lessons  
 March-June, 2021: Rachel Ritchot & helpers deliver 1hr/week to WFN Daycare & Chief Tomat Elem. School  
 April 1, 2021: Adult fluency program graduation, N2 & C2. Filmed oral final presentations, public, Youtube  
 April 7: 1-Year fluency cohort begins via zoom. 4 days/wk 9am-12 +office hours. 14 learners, 4 teachers  
 May-June 2021: E.D. spends 4 weeks in Inchelium WA, teaching adult cohort via zoom, strengthening partnership with Inchelium Language House (ILCA), and recruiting learners for Advanced Cohort  
 May-July 2021: SLH partners with Grouse and Pamela Barnes to deliver a series of 10 evening language and culture sessions over zoom, with introductory language by youth staff member Kylie Jack.  
 June 30 2021: Financial year end. Full time beginner and advanced cohorts continue C1 & N3

### **Overview of Year 7 July 2021 to Oct 15, 2021 & projections**

July 22, 2021: *SSOS symposium, Michele Keynote. Attended by SLH FT staff and adult fluency cohort*  
 July 24: *Elders VII Book Launch on zoom to share books and audio with the public*  
 July, 2021: *Carden Consulting and Humanities Financial hired to upgrade SLH governance*  
 July 29 2021: 1-year cohort C1 Final oral presentations, filmed on public zoom  
 August: *Administrative and teaching break. 2 FT staff, adult teachers, return to university*  
 Sept 7: 1-year cohort starts N2, 14 hours a week, paid stipends. 10 learners, 2 teachers  
 Sept 7: *Day 1 for 2 new staff hired from cohort, & new bookkeeper Tracey Schwartz CPA*  
 Sept 13: Day 1 NEW Advanced N3 cohort (partnership with ILCA) 6 hrs/week afternoons  
 Oct 5-7: *Michele Keynote speaker at Cultural Survival Indigenous Language Conference (zoom).*  
 Oct 26 2021: Annual General Meeting, zoom, reporting Year 6 & to date

#### **Projected**

Dec 1 2021: 1-year cohort N2 oral presentations, filmed, public  
 March 31, 2022: *Administrative/Financial Year End of Year 7 "short year"*  
 April 7, 2022: 1-Year Adult fluency cohort Graduation. C2 filmed oral presentations, public.  
 April 7, 2022: N3 Advanced cohort final class for the year (continuation TBA)  
 2 week Spring Break (begin Year 8)



Enjoying lunch in outdoor immersion nest, summer 2020, Krista Lindley with 2 moms and 2 youth staff

## 5. Domains of Use

Research shows full fluency requires three things: intensive, quality study for 2,000 hours; speak with people more advanced than you; and turn off English in a domain of use. While in theory, learners can turn off English in their homes (and yes this *is* the best place to create fluency), most learners require support. We can't mandate what language people will speak at home, but we *can* mandate the language they will speak in the workplace. In our six years, SLH has come to realize that to create full fluency it is our *responsibility* to create domains of use for the language. In languages like German or Arabic, once learners reach Intermediate, it is recommended they travel to the country and immerse themselves. With Nsyilxcn this is sadly no longer an option. We need to form the country ourselves. The Curriculum will take them so far, but to achieve full fluency and advanced speaking levels, adults need to be working in a full time work domain. Children learn by being raised in immersion. Our best options for *domains of use* given the current realities within community are forming small immersion schools and continuing to work with and record Elders. For now, we are focusing on building adult fluency, knowing that domains of use are in our future. We ran a domain of use, a Language Nest, over an intensive year, and helped the TKTX to run in their own homes.

## 2020 Plan

Three years ago, we began lobbying for what we called our '2020 Plan.' It involved starting three languages houses, PIB, OIB, WFN, with 30 students in each location, including staff from the Band schools, taught by SLH graduates. In 2024, the 100 fully trained graduates would begin 'domains of use' starting with a Language Nest (immersion with staff and toddlers), and shifting the Band schools into full immersion. The lobbying grew traction in 2018 with WFN Council agreeing to the plan. OIB formed the OIB Language House in 2020. The planning stalled as interior Nation-level conflicts around language escalated. SLH quietly builds fluency within its own walls, and builds positivity through outreach. SLH is not currently in communication with Chiefs and Councils.

## Schools with Rachel Ritchot

SLH formed partnerships after the nest to continue to build fluency skills. Our certified teacher, Rachel Ritchot has been phenomenal with outreach. Our partners, Chief Tomat Elementary School and the WFN

Daycare are thrilled to have language delivered within their institutions one hour per week. Rachel and helpers Skekxmisat and Michele delivered language from March to June, 2021, with a break for summer, and started up again October 2021. In one hour per week, the children and Rachel will not become fluent. However it is a great start to relationship building and continues to build language and teaching skills. Their activities are centred around fun language games that build vocabulary and confidence.

## Language nest

The language nest was a huge part of our effort to create domain of use in the past year; a full immersion domain for staff and toddlers. It was an exercise in the lived experience of practicing what we preach: full immersion in the home environment. It was a huge success on many levels, and also an immense challenge in terms of administration and the regulations of working with toddlers.

## Partnership with TKTX

We started the nest out of faith that we have the right to speak our language. Our funders support the method of language nest immersion, and we courageously stepped into uncharted territories as community members who are passionate about language. SLH proudly supported an emerging Indigenous Language and Culture non profit through their first year of operation. Ti Kwu Ti Xilx Indigenous Association (TKTX) was formed by three Syilx women, Krista Lindley, Hailey Causton and Michele Johnson in August 2019 to provide an *immersion domain* workplace for staff and toddlers. It filled a gap, as moms needed that support to remain in language classes while someone watched their kids. Michele wrote and obtained funding for the nest from FPCC. The nest funding required *full immersion*, a high expectation of beginner speaking staff. We managed because of the rigorous adult fluency lessons that the three founding women had previously completed through SLH, and ongoing adult curriculum lessons during the day. Michele fundraised, reported, administered, hired, wrote contracts, trained, scheduled, planned, budgeted, developed curriculum, rented a space, and taught staff language during TKTX's first year of operation while maintaining SLH. It was a heavy lift; the sacrifice was that Michele wrote fewer academic papers and essentially lost her outside life for a year. The three women combined SLH/TKTX in order to have a larger adult cohort, a nest space for staff and moms to practice language with toddlers while maintaining fun, safe outdoor and indoor immersion spaces.

The nest year in a nutshell: The nest ran in Krista Lindley's home, run by Michele and Krista, starting with one toddler and building up to three, until Spring 2020. In the summer of 2020 it ran as a 4 day/week outdoor program with five staff and four toddlers. Six hours a day of immersion were provided to four toddlers and staff. The outdoor nest was wonderful. Our hearts sang to do circle time, games, and hikes in immersion with the children. Bonds were formed and we fell in love with the language and the land. SLH hired Sofia Terbasket and Kylie Jack, two exceptional Syilx youth, for the summer of 2020. They became adept at leading children's activities and teaching the adult program.

In July 2020, an Early Childhood Educator (ECE) and assistant were hired and a rented basement was acquired. A certified teacher, another assistant teacher and a summer student were hired in August. This created a need for beginner lessons for new staff, on top of the existing staff training and nest program. A three week N1 intensive was run for the new staff. Around this time, Michele discovered that running an immersion nest, although fully funded and supported was illegal, according to BC childcare licensing. While doing their best to navigate the choppy waters of the rights to language and legality, by September, nest was running full time in full immersion, as an outdoor program. Nest was moved indoors for the afternoons in September, due to the health of the ECE. Nest continued to run outdoors the mornings until November 2020. In November 2020, after months of Covid closures, SLH and TKTX created an amicable signed agreement to divide their administration and TKTX took over its own governance. SLH expects them to continue to provide excellent immersion care, obtain daycare licensing, and maintain excellent non profit reporting, bookkeeping,

fundraising, and administration. TKTX now runs as a successful autonomous non-profit association and continues to receive grants from FPCC.

The nest ran in full immersion, summer and fall to November, 2020. TKTX hired an ECE and assistant in July 2020. SLH drafted policies and procedures, in consultation with Krista Lindley, and delivered training week in August 2020 for the SLH and TKTX FT staff. Unfortunately TKTX management, Krista Lindley and Hailey Causton, were unable to attend training week due to family responsibilities. A series of Covid lockdowns ensued through the fall. In a perfect world, management would have had an off-site to get on the same page in regards to immersion. Unfortunately, due to Covid, the intensive immersion schedule, in the Indigenous world, and with mothers of small children, an off-site was not possible. Krista and Hailey were not able to participate in governance training or participate in full time hours at the nest, leaving the administrative burden on Michele.

After successfully steering through a global pandemic for nearly a year, the partnership was divided by combined tensions of organizational growth, language tension, lack of shared commitment to immersion, and Covid-19. Low fluency levels of the new staff and ECE were creating tensions, the ECE was delivering in English, and not adhering to the HR policy. The ECE reached out to Hailey Causton, on maternity leave. On Oct 14, 2020, Hailey Causton returned to work with a two month old infant, N'xsils, after a one year university leave and three month maternity leave, to assume a managerial role for TKTX. Interpersonal conflict came to the surface, particularly with new hires. Michele met with each team member individually over the week leading up to an all staff vision meeting on Oct. 29. During an all-day vision meeting, it was decided that the nest needed to run in English for a while, due to startup, training and language tensions. November 2, 2020, Michele announced she and the SLH staff needed to work from her home due to Covid. SLH would return to a focus on adult fluency and release the responsibility of fluency of the children to their moms at TKTX. The partnership had an exit meeting February 2021 over zoom. The rented basement suite, which had run as a combined nest and adult program, was let go in early 2021. SLH continued to deliver language to TKTX staff until April 2021.

Reflections for growth: There is no way of knowing how the partnership would have thrived if the pandemic had not intervened. The multiple personalities and tensions of running two organizations at once proved to be too much. During the workday, running the nest, making snacks, scheduling moms and toddlers, training staff, the SLH/TKTX management team experienced interpersonal conflict. Speaking from a managerial perspective, aversion to conflict is a “key dysfunction” of a team. Unfortunately our team had an extreme aversion to conflict, a key difficulty in Indigenous community. In November 2020, TKTX moms moved the nest into their homes and was run as a mom and tot program, with reduced numbers of immersion hours and staff language lessons. SLH doubled the hours of staff language training and shifted to Michele’s home and zoom. Much was learned during the heavy lifting of running two Indigenous community organizations. For example, moving forward 10% of SLH staff time is dedicated to conflict resolution and lateral kindness training.



## **Ti Kʷu Ti ǂilx Indigenous Association**

*Mission: To provide dynamic Salish language revitalization powering cultural renewal and building a stronger, healthier community.*



Telemark Nordic Centre in Westbank was a great immersion destination once a week Fluency combined with fitness, being out on the land and fun in the snow

Once we started going outdoors for large stretches of time, FT staff language learning really took off, especially our youth staff Kylie Jack and Sofia Terbasket-Funmaker, and the kids loved it. Favourite activities were tobogganning and cross country skiing in the winter, and hiking, duck-duck-goose, what time is it Mr. Wolf, and treasure hunt in the summer.



Nest hiking crew, discovering the environment. Over the summer of 2020 there were 5 kids and 6 staff.

Ksultíkn learns how to jump and ƛaʔsmíwʔt discovers that he loves síyaʔ, under the watchful eye of our two phenomenal youth staff Kylie Jack and Sofia Terbasket-Funmaker. Moms in the program courageously enrolled their kids for the good of language, St'aqwalq̓s (manager), Sexwt'ums (manager), Stk'masq't, and Speplina.

## 6. Partnerships

Grouse Barnes & Pamela Barnes: SLH and this powerhouse team of cultural education and fluency, WFN members, delivered a series of 10 drop-in evening sessions over zoom, May-July 2021. Grouse continues to come to the adult fluency program each month.

Fluent Elders: provide class visits, mentorship, and conduct recordings. Elders this year include Grouse Barnes, Herman Edward, Victor Antoine, Theresa Ann Terbasket, Theresa Dennis and Thomas Pierre.

Salish School of Spokane provides curriculum and mentorship. SSOS was and is contracted for FPCC digitization grant transcriptions.

Kelowna Museums and Sncwips Museum provide outreach and social media support.

Chief Tomat Elementary School, WFN Daycare. Rachel Ritchot delivered one hour sessions Mar.-June 2021, and started up the year again in Oct., 2021, adding the partner the Boys and Girls Club of the Okanagan.

Witsuwit'en, Northern BC: Kyah Wiget Education Society and Witsset Elementary Secondary School are using and adapting the SsoS Salish Fluency Transfer System and Curriculum for the Witsuwit'en language. Michele gave a presentation/training in the Salish Curriculum teaching method in early Spring, 2021.

Tlingit, Northern BC/Yukon: Taku River Tlingit Society. Michele gave a training in the Salish Curriculum teaching method, and mentorship in program delivery, spring 2021.

Other partners: WFN, ONA and TKTX continue to provide support letters and maintain a dialogue with SLH. OIB Language House is going strong with six learners, two days a week.

## 7. Recommendations

- Continue following the example of *kindness and love promoted by Sƛaṁtícaʔ*
- Continue lateral kindness and professional communication training with staff, partners, learners
- Continue mentorship of outside organizations and languages
- Continue to build fluency of SLH staff through daily lessons
- Continue to invite Elders to class, to do recordings, and to share published works
- Organize on-line “Northern Celebrating Salish” Conference, Apr. 2022
- Stay small and effective ... **grow SLH to 12 full time staff over the next three years**
- FT staff will expand Elder recording, Elder conversation, community delivery
- Deliver part-time Kindergarten & pre-K in partnership with schools, Westbank daycare, partners
- Recruit and hire **FT executive assistant/funding manager/communications**
- Continue to stay on top of the research and share in international conferences
- Continue to follow SSOS and their leading example in language revitalization
- Continue outreach to the Syilx Nation, nurture partnerships, WFN C&C, invite WFN participants
- Strengthen governance and increase board meetings from annually to quarterly
- Improve bookkeeping systems, plan for audit as charitable non profit
- Continue to share successes and realistic challenges with the international community
- Maintain a strong, positive social media presence, with open drop-in beginner events
- Look for opportunities for partnerships and in-kind donations
- Invite opportunities with **graduates to develop full time domains of use**

## 8. Financial Summary

SLH is grateful to our funders which include First Peoples Culture Council (FPCC), National Indian Brotherhood Trust Fund (NIB), Vancouver Foundation, the Vadon Foundation, private and corporate donors. Most of SLH's operating costs are staff on the path to fluency. SLH received charitable status Oct. 3, 2019 which allowed us to apply for and receive the NIB and Vancouver grants this year. The NIB grant requires a financial audit, March 31, 2022. SLH contracted Humanities Financial, July-Oct 2021, and a new bookkeeper, Tracey Schwartz CPA, September 2021. Our financial statement was prepared by Kemp Harvey Kemp.

### In Kind donations

12 Students' time during the N1 evening program; 50 learners in drop in evening sessions  
Classroom space donated to the evening program by WFN, prior to switch to zoom March 2020  
Infrastructure, staff, children at Chief Tomat Elementary School and Westbank Daycare  
Salish School of Spokane Nsyilxcn Curriculum, lesson plans and mentorship

## END of 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Report

way' liṃlṃt thank you,



Sṽimlaṽx<sup>w</sup> Michele Johnson PhD  
Executive Director, Syilx Language House