

TSET HÍKWSTEXW TE SQWÉLTEL TSET,  
WE HOLD OUR LANGUAGE HIGH:  
THE MEANING OF HALQ'EMÉYLEM LANGUAGE RENEWAL  
IN THE EVERYDAY LIVES OF STÓ:LŌ PEOPLE

by

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines the phenomenon of what Halq'eméylem renewal means in the lives of Stó:lō people today. Stó:lō elders emphasize that Stó:lō identity and worldview are embedded in our near-extinct Halq'eméylem language, which identifies us as a distinct Aboriginal people in Canada. To illuminate the elders' assertion, the author uses an heuristic approach to examine a) the historical demise and recent rise of our language using *st'áxem* (worthless people) and *smelá:lh* (worthy people) as a metaphorical theme reflected in our lived experience, b) how the term *smstýexw* expresses a Stó:lō worldview of spiritual relationship with the land based on harmony and respect, and c) how Halq'eméylem binds the people and their Riverworldview into an indistinguishable whole. These aspects of Stó:lō history and language provide a context for the stories of what language renewal means to nine Halq'eméylem revivalists who have been associated with the Skulkayn, Coqualeetza and Shxwelí programs, spanning over thirty years of Halq'eméylem renewal efforts.

The researcher uses an aesthetic approach drawing on the concept of “humans as aesthetic,” with the assumption that “as one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness.” This assumption is applied to reviving Halq'eméylem to restore wholeness to what it means to be Stó:lō. Interviews with the co-researchers were conducted using an aesthetic protocol of empathy and respect. The interviews were transformed into “poetic monologues” to engage the reader in a dynamic of “play,” and present the co-researchers close to the depictions of their experiences.

The “poetic monologues” reveal that within a short period of time, the Stó:lō persisted against all odds to develop a multi-dimensional Halq'eméylem movement to “*hold our language high*.” In addition to increased self-esteem and pride with the use of Halq'eméylem, we can see a reversal of the trend toward Halq'eméylem extinction. The Halq'eméylem revivalists draw their inspiration from the fluent speaking elders who contribute unconditionally to the revival effort; their greatest rewards are hearing the children speak, sing and pray in Halq'eméylem. The study concludes that Riverworldview is manifest in Stó:lō contemporary life, and that Halq'eméylem revitalization can continue the legacy of a Riverworld aesthetic into the future.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	iii
Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgments .....	vii
Glossary of Halq'eméylem terms .....	ix
Á:ylexw te Stó:lō Shxwelí. The Spirit of the Stó:lō lives. ....	1
Chapter 1.....	6
“Without our language we will cease to exist as a unique people” .....	6
Language is Culture, Culture is Language .....	6
Halq'eméylem Origins.....	12
Stó:lō Halq'eméylem Today .....	14
Halq'eméylem Revival.....	16
Research Method .....	19
A Very Special Wild Strawberry Patch.....	23
Chapter 2.....	30
Te St'áxem Qas Te Smelá:lh .....	30
The Demise and Rise of Halq'eméylem .....	31
Sqwèlqwels the Ethel: Unlearning St'áxem.....	40
Xá:ls and Worlds of Chaos: Xwelítem Encounter .....	46
Putting Things Right in Our World: Reversing the White Paper Policy.....	50
Becoming Smelá:lh: Rising to the Challenge .....	52
Chapter 3.....	55
S'ólh Téméxw and Our Worldview .....	55
Our Land, Our Country, Our World .....	55
Two Different Worlds: The Western Influence.....	58
“Dominion Over” and “Harmony With”: Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being .....	61
“Quarks” and “All my relations!” .....	68
Our Stories, Our Selves: It's in the Telling .....	71
What Halq'eméylem Means to the Stó:lō: “I felt I was called home. . .” .....	87
Xexéylthettset: Writing Ourselves .....	88
Chapter 4.....	91
T'ít'elemettset te St'ílems the Skw'okw'qá:q, Singing the Robin's Song.....	91
River People, River Culture.....	97
Riverworldview.....	109
Chapter 5.....	111
Íyómex, Éyqwlha, Yú:wqwlha .....	111
“It's Really Beautiful” .....	113
Kenny's Aesthetics.....	115
Fields of Beauty: Humans as Aesthetic.....	119
Personal Reflections on Aesthetic .....	122

Metaphor: The Artistry of Lived Experience .....	125
Aesthetic Attitude and Indigenous Codes of Conduct.....	128
Play: “The Intelligence of the Heart” .....	131
Chapter 6.....	137
Gathering Wild Strawberries.....	137
Chapter 7.....	151
A Basket of Wild Strawberries.....	151
“Signed, ta’ siyáye, your friend.” .....	151
Katelíla.....	151
“Teach the Children With Love” .....	167
Koyàlemót.....	167
“A reawakening of what’s there.” .....	185
Tyroné.....	185
“It just has to burst through.” .....	199
Xwelíxwiya.....	199
“... In my mind, I can do it.” .....	217
Kwósel.....	217
“We have a beautiful dream.” .....	226
T’ít’elem Spá:th .....	226
“Just going to teach my little guy.” .....	242
Épelel.....	242
“They went and taught on their own.” .....	254
Siyàmiyatéliyot.....	254
“I was going to be stubborn” .....	270
Yómalot.....	270
Chapter 8.....	284
Dessert of wild strawberries.....	284
Bibliography.....	300
Appendices .....	306

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to all our Stó:lō ancestors who left us a rich and beautiful cultural heritage developed from thousands of years of living in our River environment, and who made us who we are as Stó:lō people today. I especially dedicate this thesis to Stó:lō elders: *Yónulət* (Rosaleen George), *Ts'áts'eləxwət* (Elizabeth Herrling), *Sijàrriyatéljət* (Elizabeth Phillips), *Xwizdəmət* (Tillie Gutierrez) and *Tsəloyəbəlweət* (Shirley Julian) who inspired me and many others with their unconditional love for our language and people, and whose tireless efforts in Halq'eméylem revitalization will shine through *S'ólh Ténéxcw* for many generations to come. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my *Tá:l*, Bertha Prest, who loved all that was Stó:lō and who sang the most beautiful rendition of the song called "My Home by the Fraser" that I have ever heard, and to my *Má:l*, Frank Gardner, who taught me to be proud and distinct, to be *Xwélnəxcw* to be real. *Yúwqulba!*

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*Yááh Yexw Kwáas Hó, Meks'ewáites!*



## GLOSSARY OF HALQ'EMÉYLEM TERMS

*Tset hke'ustex'w te squelteltset*, We hold our language high  
*Yálh yex'wkw'as hóy, mək'wewátes*, Thank you, everyone.  
*A:ylex'w te Stó:ló shx'welí*. The spirit of the Stó:ló lives.  
*S'ólh Ténéx'w*, Our Land  
*sx'wix'wiyám*, Origin stories  
*Xá:ls*, Transformer  
*Xex'á:ls*, Transformers  
*Chíbelh Siyám*, Great Spirit  
*Xwelítém*, White person  
*Xwelítém*, White persons  
*st'áx'em*, worthless people who does not know their history (\*)  
*smé:lá:lh*, worthy people who knows their history  
*pél:de'utset*, we rise  
*xéy'lbet'et*, write ourselves  
*Xwelítémqel*, White language, English  
*Éyqulha!*, beautiful!  
*Yú:uqulha!*, really beautiful!  
*L'áw, Líbex'w we éyo?* Hello, How are you?  
*Ts'ás'el éy!* Very fine.  
*Tl'í:lsthóm*, I love you  
*mó:qw*, bird or duck  
*shx'welí*, spirit  
*Xwobiyám*, always wild strawberries, Cheam village and island  
*L'álem ye Sebyólex'w*, House of Elders  
*Te Squelteltset Sq'ép*, Our language Group  
*Qput Tu Squels*, Gathering of the Languages  
*squélquels*, true story  
*-méc'w*, a suffix that means person  
*Halq'éméylem*, Upriver dialect of Halkomelem  
*S'ólh Ténéx'w te ik'wéló* This is Our Land.  
*Xólhmet te mək'w'stám*. We have to look after everything that belongs to us.  
*sméstiyex'w*, power of thought and vitality in all of nature  
*L'hílhegi*, Mother mountain, Mt. Cheam  
*xex'éyt*, change or transform something, now name for site near Hatzic  
*xéyt*, root of above  
*xéy'lt*, write something  
*xé'te*, saying, say, said  
*xwá:ysetcha*, we will die out  
*éwe xwá:yset..*we did not die out

*xéyláxwem*, they wrote us  
*xéylthetset*, we wrote ourselves  
*xáitel*, writing instrument  
*áylexw*, be alive, live  
*pél:ékwsetoha*, we will rise  
*pél:ékw*, rise  
*Átháets*, Aitchelitz, “edge at bottom” or “place where two rivers meet”  
*Chiyám*, Cheam, “always wild strawberries”  
*Leq’ámel*, Lakahahmen, “level place” or “place that is visited”  
*Skwátets*, Peters, “water trickling through”  
*Sq’éwqel*, Seabird Island, “turn in the river”  
*Shxw’ówhámmá*, O’hamil, “where the river levels and widens”  
*St’elxweth’*, Squeah, St’elxweth’, “to move in a semi-circle with the current”  
*Skwáye*, possibly “waterfalls” or from Lillooet  
*Ch’iyáqtel*, Tzeachten, “fish weir”  
*Xwaxwélá:lhq*, Yale, “willow tree place”  
*Ts’elxwéyewu*, “quieter water on the head” (Galloway, 1993, p.649)  
*skw’iyéth*, slave  
*shxwálám*, Indian doctor  
*t’ílem*, song  
*st’ílem*, to sing  
*mst’hexw*, person or people  
*syilólem*, year  
*skwéxás*, moon, month  
 -as, suffix refers to face, round, coin  
*kwéx-*, to count (root in the word for moon or month)  
*máqa*, fallen snow(s)[the word is not plural but is used that way with numbers to count years.]  
*tempók’w*, October, time to smoke dry Chehalis spring salmon  
*tenhálhtel*, time to dry salmon (October)  
*xets’ó:wstet*, November, time to put away canoe paddles for winter  
*telxwátsel*, leaves are falling (November)  
*mexás*, December, fallen snow season  
*palóqes*, January, dried sockeye head, torch season  
*teml’í:q’es*, February, time to get jammed in as in a trap, a box, referring to snow in pithouse  
*tem’elémtes*, time one’s hand sticks to things from the cold (February)  
*welék’es*, March, little frog season, when they start talking  
*qweloythí:lem*, birds making music, (March)  
*tenkwékwéxel*, April, time for baby sockeye salmon  
*lhenn’óles*, time of spring showers in one’s eyes (April)  
*tem’éllé*, May, time for salmonberries  
*temqogá*, June, time for high water  
*tem’ámxw*, time for gooseberries (June)  
*epóléstel*, July, tenth month  
*temqwá:l*, time for mosquitoes (July)

*temchálhtel*, time to wind dry fish at Yale (July)  
*temthéqí*, August, time for sockeye salmon  
*temkw'ó:lexw*, September, time for dog salmon  
*lí te smá:l*, to the mountain  
*tó:l*, toward the river (on land), toward the middle of the river (when in the river)  
*chúchu*, way from shore (on the river)  
*chó:leqw*, toward the backwoods, away from the river.  
*wōqw'*, drift downstream, drown  
*lhós*, drift downriver  
*ahín*, upstream  
*tíyt*, upriver  
*lhóse:xel*, downriver way, down that way, downriver below  
*tíytexel*, upriver way, up that way, way upriver  
*tellhós*, from downriver  
*teltíyt*, from upriver  
*slbéq'qel*, way upriver  
*lbeq'ewílh*, 'opposite side of the house (on the inside)  
*chuchuwáxel*, 'front end of house (inside or out)  
*stselqwáxel*, 'back end of house (inside or out)  
*stíytáxel*, 'upper end of house (inside or out)  
*sewqwáxel*, 'lower end of the house'  
*t'óxcw*, 'going downriver'  
*xwí'óxcwestses*, 'hollow of the hand'  
*xwí'óxcwexcel*, 'arch of the foot,'  
*éy*, be good, good, it is good  
*Yú:w!*, exclamation, 'really beautiful!'

\* Note on the use of the term *st'áxcem*.

Some discrepancy exists regarding the use of the term *st'áxcem*. Carlson (1997, p.90) lists the term *s'téxcem* to mean 'low status,' 'worthless people who have forgotten their history.' There is no sequence of "s't" [s't] permitted anywhere in Halq'eméylem. Galloway's (1999) *Finderlist for Upriver Halkomelem Dictionary* includes a close rendition of *s'téxcem* in *stíxcem*, the word for 'slime,' and *títexem*, the word for 'slimy.' However, this term is not known to be used to refer to people. The word for 'unfortunate person' is listed as *stítesòs* in **Tó:lméls Ye Siyelyólexwa** (1980, p. 101). *Stítesòs* is also listed in Galloway's (1999) *Finderlist* as 'low class person.' A Downriver (Katzie) Halq'eméylem term "st'exəm" does refer to low-class person (Suttles, 1955:12), and the Downriver (Musqueam) Halkomelem term is given as St'éxcem 'low-class person' in the 1985 draft of Suttles Musqueam Grammar: Downriver IPA é corresponds to Upriver orthographic á, and the Halq'eméylem spelling *st'áxcem* will be used for this paper.

Á:YLEXW TE STÓ:LŌ SHXWELÍ. THE SPIRIT OF THE STÓ:LŌ LIVES.

Today, there is a movement afoot in *S'ólh Téréxw*,  
A movement of Halq'eméylem revivalists  
Who are taking the last breath of our Halq'eméylem language,  
"Putting it away" in their hearts and minds  
And breathing it throughout the land.

*Á:ylexw te Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stólō lives.*

We are the Upriver Halq'eméylem people of  
The Sumas, Pilalt, Chilliwack, Chehalis and Tait.

Our *Sxwaxwiyám* tell us we have lived here since time immemorial.  
And tell of *Xá:ls* who brought order to our world  
When people with power, animal people,  
Deformed men and other creatures prevailed.  
*Chíchelh Siyám*, the Great Spirit, creator of earth and humanity  
Sent *Xá:ls* to earth "to put things right."  
*Xá:ls* transformed our ancestors into animals, plants and stones.  
These stories of a myth-age world, with mystery beyond our ken,  
Tell how we became fully human, and connected to *S'ólh Téréxw*

*Á:ylexw te Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stólō lives.*

Our Halq'eméylem language, born of our interconnecting  
Interrelationship with the River, the Stólō,  
Defined us, gave us our identity,  
Including a protocol of respect and power shared with all of nature,  
A philosophy in *harmony with* her.  
Our Halq'eméylem language, a gift from the creator,  
Expresses best our relationship with each other and creation.

*Á:ylexw te Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stólō lives.*

"So God created man in his own image" says the book of Genesis,  
"In the image of God created he him; male and female created he them,  
And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful and Multiply,  
And replenish the earth and subdue it; and have *dominion over* the fish of the sea,  
Over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth (Genesis,  
Chap. 1 Vx. 27, 28).

The West came with their *dominion over* philosophy, and  
Recreated us with their systems of understanding the world.  
“They should be good servants and very intelligent,” says Columbus,  
“For I have observed that they soon repeat anything that is said to them,  
And I believe that they would easily be made Christian,  
For they appeared to me to have no religion.”

*Á:ɣlexwte Stó:lō Shxweli. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

When Europeans came to *S’ólh Téméxw*, we called them  
“Hungry people,” or “*Xwéliem*” in Halq’eméylem,  
Reflecting the *Xwéliem*’s insatiable appetite for the land and its resources.  
And then came the darkest era in the history of our relations with the *Xwéliem*,  
When their diseases nearly wiped us out; their laws kept us in check;  
And their alcohol numbed our pain, and brought us to our lowest point.

We became *st’áxem*, worthless people  
Who do not know our history, language and culture.  
The residential schools wrought the destruction of our family system,  
The most powerful means by which our language and culture was transmitted.  
We became confused and ambivalent about who we were,  
Unable to develop self-esteem and pride in being Stó:lō.

*Á:ɣlexwte Stó:lō Shxweli. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

“Language is culture, culture is language.”  
“Language is central to cultural identity.”  
“Language enhances self-esteem and pride.”  
“Language expresses the Worldview of its speakers,” and  
“Without our language we will cease to exist as a unique people.”

These elders’ refrains echo in my mind as a Stó:lō person  
Who is acutely aware of the critical state of our language.

*Á:ɣlexwte Stó:lō Shxweli. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

Today, only a few adults speak Halq’eméylem fluently.  
It is rarely taught to our children at home.  
Our fluent speakers are declining as our numbers increase, and  
Only three of them can read and write our language.  
English is spoken in most situations.

We are told our language is *obsolescent*, heading toward *extinction*,

And what we do now will determine whether we reverse the process,  
Or allow our precious Halq'eméylem to die.  
We can choose: *st'áxcem* or *smelá:lh*.  
We can choose to become *smelá:lh*, worthy people  
Who know our history, language and culture.

*Á:yléxcwte Stó:lō Shxcwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

“How can you claim your land back if you can't even speak your own language?”  
Came the taunting words of Pierre Elliot Trudeau who challenged our  
Rights to exist as distinct peoples of this land in his 1969 White Paper policy.  
Aboriginal peoples united in protest against the policy and reversed it  
Asserting our Rights as distinct Aboriginal peoples of this land.  
Ten thousand years of S'ólh Téméxw and what it means to be Stó:lō  
Will not be wiped away by 150 years of European colonization.  
“We are fighting for our language, now,” says *Tseloyóthekwet*,  
Our young elder teacher, and in my mind I understand that  
We are fighting for *S'ólh Téméxw*, and all that it means to us.  
“Our legends and stories entrench us in our country, *S'ólh Téméxw*  
Therefore our Halq'eméylem connects us to the land,” says *Tlówkōmot*,  
Who is learning Halq'eméylem and teaching it to others.

*Á:yléxcwte Stó:lō Shxcwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

And now, from under the veil of *Xwelítem* influence,  
We rise, *pé:ekwáset*, to name ourselves, to write ourselves, *xéylthetset*,  
Even in *Xwelítemqel*, in the *Xwelítem* tongue, *xéyltócwem*  
And though our Halq'eméylem language, our *Xwelímexwqel*, has been submerged  
Deep under the veil of *Xwelítem* influence, we and our *Xwelímexwqel*,  
Our Halq'eméylem language, will burst through the *Xwelítem* veil and  
Breathe our identity throughout *S'ólh Téméxw*  
For the spirit of the Stó:lō, the spirit of the River, lives in our language.

*Á:yléxcwte Stó:lō Shxcwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

Halq'eméylem, an art that expresses the deep  
Interconnectedness between the Stó:lō and Riverworld,  
Binds the people and Riverworld into an indistinguishable whole,  
Into a Riverworld aesthetic.  
*Éyqulha*, “Beautiful,” *Yík-wqulha*, “Really Beautiful!”  
As one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness,  
Or the fullest potential of what one can be in the world.

*Á:yléxcwte Stó:lō Shxcwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

I assume my self to be Stó:lō.  
When I know who I am as a Stó:lō person, I feel like a whole person.  
If I do not have a strong sense of who I am,  
I cannot function as a whole human being.  
When I hear my language, I feel emotional.  
When I see a Stó:lō elder speak Halq'eméylem, my emotions well up inside.  
It's the coming to be whole, a recognition, a resonance of something deep inside  
That wants to take form, to understand itself, *an intuitive synchronicity*.  
Yes, tears well up in my eyes at the wonder of becoming what I always knew I was.  
It's in my blood, it's in the land, it's in the naming, naming me.

*Á:ɣlexwte Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

"Please sing 'My Home by the Fraser,'" I would ask my mom repeatedly.  
The song raised images I remembered of Hope, BC,  
Of the mountains, lakes and rivers, of the wild flowers, berries, salmon and oolichans.  
We would play by the creeks and lakes,  
And we would often go to Kawkawa Lake for swims, and for picnics.  
All these things seemed pretty normal to me.  
The word "Stó:lō" was never spoken in our home.  
Nor was it understood that our Stó:lō language was called Halq'eméylem.  
Sometimes Dad would call us "re-e-al *Xwélmexw*,  
And said that it meant that we were re-e-al Indians.  
I felt proud and distinct to be *Xwélmexw* to be real.

*Á:ɣlexwte Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

The elders have watched our precious Halq'eméylem diminish before their very eyes,  
Swiftly replaced by English, "that white language."  
They have watched our people struggle with uttering even a few words in Halq'eméylem.  
And after thirty years of Halq'eméylem revival efforts,  
Through Skulkayn, Coqualeetza and Shxwelí,  
They have witnessed only a few people gain moderate fluency in the language.  
Yet they never fail to give themselves to the work of Halq'eméylem revival.  
All these years of their lives, they kept the language "put away"  
In their hearts and minds for the benefit of future generations.  
We raise our hands in thanks and respect for their great feat.

*Á:ɣlexwte Stólō Shxwelí. The spirit of the Stó:lō lives.*

Today, there is a movement afoot to revive our language,  
A movement of Halq'eméylem revivalists  
Who are taking the last breath of Halq'eméylem,

“Putting it away” in their hearts and minds  
And breathing it throughout *S’ólh T’énéxw*  
*Láw, Líbexw wae éyo? Ts’áts’el éy!* Is a common refrain,  
And “*Tl’í:stórn*, [love you.]”  
Seeds have been planted in the minds of the younger generations  
Who have become hungry for the language.  
Stó:lō children are talking, praying and singing in Halq’eméylem,  
And Halq’eméylem is increasingly becoming  
A viable part of our modern Indigenous lifestyles.  
The Halq’eméylem revivalists are making it happen,  
As they work diligently and tirelessly,  
Reversing the trend of Halq’eméylem extinction.  
Halq’eméylem is reconnecting us with our Riverworld aesthetic,  
Restoring us to wholeness as Stó:lō, People of the River.

*Yí:wqulh!* How Beautiful!



## Chapter 1

“WITHOUT OUR LANGUAGE WE WILL CEASE TO EXIST AS A UNIQUE PEOPLE”

### *Language is Culture, Culture is Language*

*Language is central to cultural identity. Language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective social adjustment. Language expresses the world view of its speakers, i.e. the uniqueness of a culture in terms of food, housing, clothing, methods of travel; how the world was created; the interaction of plant, animal, bird and human life; ways we organize our society, games, songs, dances and art. Language is the principle means by which culture is brought together, shared and transmitted to successive generations. (Siyámtelot, 1988:2).*

The Stó:lō community adopted the above mission statement in 1988. Siyámtelot, otherwise known as Shirley D. Leon, in the paper *Language is Culture, Culture is Language*, states, “Why bother retaining a language which is no longer a viable part of modern Indigenous lifestyles?” Her rhetorical question reflects the current state of Stó:lō Halq’eméylem. She reiterates the contents of the mission statement quoted above and lists some of the benefits of ‘why bother’, “... can be crucial to physiological well-being, a sense of self-esteem, and social development.... [I]ntellectual growth and educational achievement flow from the ability to have command of more than one language<sup>1</sup>.” The elders of the Stó:lō community agree with a similar view regarding the importance and benefit of retaining the Stó:lō Halq’eméylem language. Siyámtelot quotes this view,

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<sup>1</sup> Siyámtelot (Shirley D. Leon). 1988. *Language is Culture, Culture is Language*. Unpublished paper. Sardis: Coqualeenwa Cultural Education and Training Centre, p. 6)

*Our language embodies a value system about how we live and relate to each other. It gives a name to relationships among kin, to roles and responsibilities among family members, to ties with broader groups. There are no English words for these relationships because, in general, social and family lives are different from ours. If our language is destroyed, these relationships break down and will inevitably destroy other aspects of our way of life and culture, especially those that describe man's connection with nature, the Great Spirit, and the order of things. Without our language, we will cease to exist as a unique people (1988:7-8; AFN, 1992).*

The elders' statement, "Without our language, we will cease to exist as a unique people," implodes in my mind as a Stó:lō person who is acutely aware of the critical state of our language. The implications of what that statement means concerns me deeply. That critical state, according to Bauman's (1980) classification, shows how Halq'eméylem is verging on obsolescence, in that

- only a few older adults speak the language fluently
- the language is not taught to children in the home
- the number of fluent speakers declines as the population increases
- English is the preferred language in most situations
- there are minimal literacy skills (reading and writing) among fluent speakers.

Obsolescence is the stage before extinction in Bauman's (1980) classification which includes *flourishing, enduring, declining, obsolescent* and *extinct* languages<sup>2</sup>. Only a handful of fluent speaking elders are involved in the language work, so what we do now as a language community is

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

crucial to determining whether we reverse the process, or allow Stó:lō Halq'eméylem to become extinct<sup>3</sup>.

We are the Upriver Halq'eméylem people. Our language is one of three dialects of Halkomelem, a member of the Salishan language family. Twenty-three languages of this family span an area extending over southern British Columbia, Washington, northern Idaho, western Montana, and northwestern Oregon. Kinkade (1992)<sup>4</sup> divides it into five branches:

Bella Coola

Central Salish

Comox/Squamish, Clallam, Halkomelem, Lushootseed, Nooksack, Pentlatch, Sechelt, Squamish, Straits Salish, Twana

Interior Salish

Coeur d'Alene, Columbian, Kalispel/Flathead/Spokane, Lillooet, Okanagan/Colville, Shuswap, Thompson

Tillamook

Tsamosan

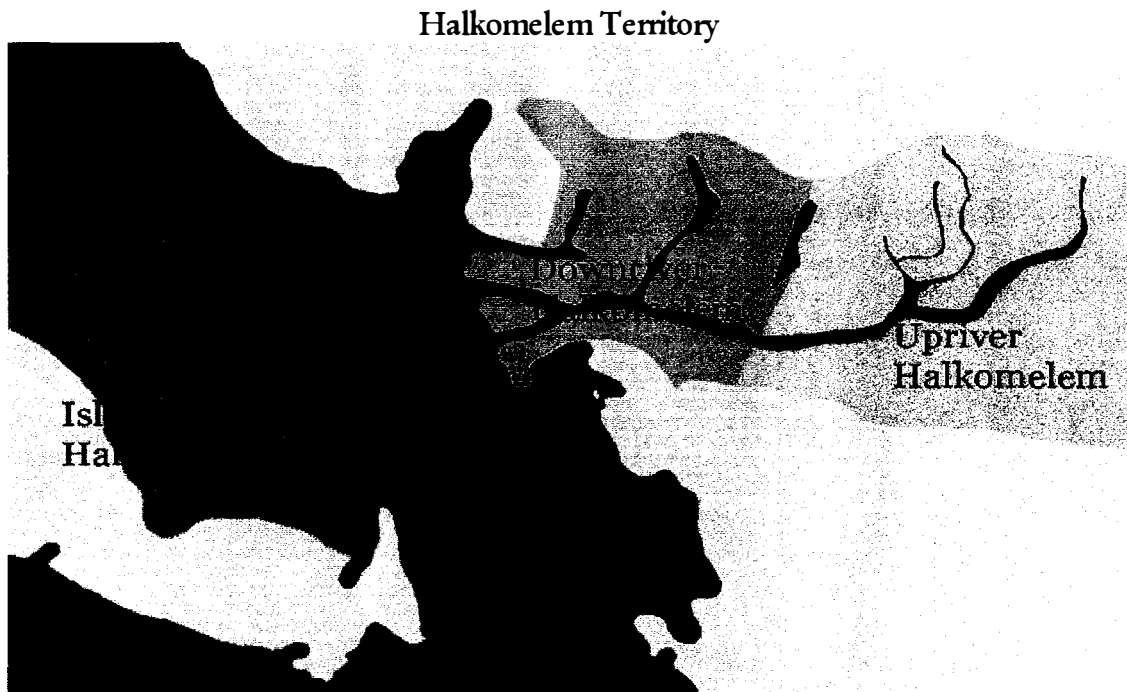
Lower Chehalis, Upper Chehalis, Cowlitz, Quinault

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<sup>3</sup> David Crystal (2000). *Language Death*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Crystal states that since we can now make a true assessment of the extent of language death, and the possibility that we might have only one language in the world in a few hundred years, proposes that it is this generation that can make a difference, to either "sit back and do nothing..." or "to act, using as many means as possible to confront the situation..." p. 165-166).

<sup>4</sup> M. Dale Kinkade, "Salishan Languages," *International Encyclopaedia of Linguistics* Volume 3. Edited by William Bright. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Halkomelem<sup>5</sup>, of the Central Salish branch, is closely related to its neighbor to the north, Squamish, and its neighbors to the south, Nooksack and Straits. and is divided into three principle dialects: Upriver, Downriver and Island...



Gerds and Compton [www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology](http://www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology)

The Upriver dialect is spoken from as far as Yale down to Matsqui in the lower Fraser Valley of southwestern British Columbia. The Downriver dialect is spoken in the Vancouver Metropolitan area, and the Island dialect is spoken on southeastern Vancouver Island from north of Saanich Arm to Nanaimo.<sup>6</sup> Halq'eméylem is used when referring to the language

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<sup>5</sup> Halkomelem is an Anglicization of the Upriver term for the language. Due to different names for the language in different dialects, the Anglicization is adopted to avoid favouritism when speaking about the whole language.

<sup>6</sup> William W. Emendorf and Wayne Suttles. (1960). Pattern and Change in Halkomelem Salish Dialects. AL 27: 1-32, p. 1.

from the Upriver perspective, and is further broken down into five sub-dialects, including Sumas, Pilalt, Chilliwack, Chehalis and Tait.<sup>7</sup>

The three dialects differ significantly in terms of phonology, syntax, and vocabulary. One of the most noticeable ways that the Upriver dialect differs from the Downriver and Island dialects is the replacement of the sound “n” with the “l” sound. The Downriver and Island dialects use both “n” and “l,” though an older sub-dialect of Downriver substituted all instances of “l” with the “n” sound.<sup>8</sup> Also, the Upriver dialect lost a set of sounds—the glottalized resonants (m’, l’, w’, y’) and developed a type of pitch-accent system of vowel tones (marked with accents). We can see these differences in the name Halkomelem (applying the Stó:lō orthography), as it is used in different places — Upriver **Halq’eméylem**, Downriver (Musqueam) **Hen’q’emi’nem’**, and Island **Hel’q’emi’nem’**. Notice the glottalized resonants marked by ( ’ ) on the Downriver and Island versions that are omitted in Upriver. Notice as well, the replacement of “l” in all instances of “n” for Upriver and the replacement of “n” for “l” in the Downriver version of Halkomelem. Island uses both “n” and “l.” Also note the accent on the “é” for Upriver Halkomelem.

Gerdtz (1977),<sup>9</sup> who studied vocabulary differences in the three Halkomelem dialects, found that they form a chain. Some words are shared among all three dialects, while others are

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<sup>7</sup> Donna B Gerdtz. (1977). *A Dialect Survey of Halkomelem Salish*. A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts. University of British Columbia. Gerdtz Thesis indicated four dialects of Upriver, Sumas, Chilliwack, Chehalis and Tait; however later descriptions include Pilalt.

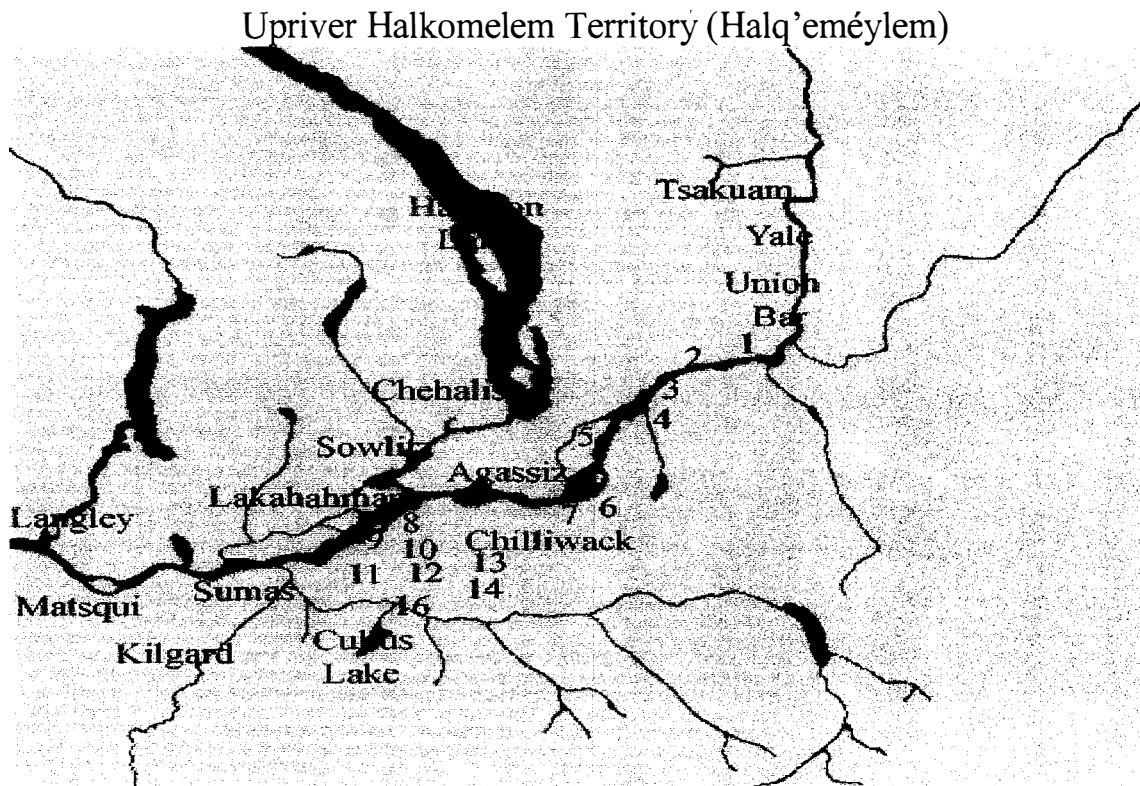
<sup>8</sup> Elmendorf & Suttles. pp 6-7. The authors note that the (l) and (n) sounds were part of both the Musqueam, or Downriver, and the Cowichan, or Island, dialects. Part of the Musqueam speaking community at one time shifted all (l) to (n), and suggest that the shift was cultivated as a status symbol.

<sup>9</sup> Gerdtz, pp. 24-30.

shared just between Upriver and Downriver, or between Downriver and Island dialects. Sometimes each dialect has a different word. For example the word 'big' is *híkew* in Upriver but *thi* in Downriver and Island. The word 'box' is *k'wóxcwe/k'wóxcwe'* in Upriver and Downriver but *x'hem* in Island. The Upriver dialect shows a pattern of vocabulary replacement, where meanings of words shifted over time and new words were invented making use of semantically similar roots. For example, *sméyeb*, the word meaning 'meat' in Upriver is the word for 'deer' in Island and Downriver, but *il'elq'ale* (literally 'long ear') is the word for 'deer' in Upriver. The Island dialect has many words in common with other Central Salish languages, suggesting extensive contact with them, especially Straits, making it the most diverse of the dialects lexically.

The three dialects differ significantly from each other, and there has been no *unified* effort to teach and study the languages. Each dialect has its own orthography (sometimes more than one), reference grammar, dictionary, teaching materials, teachers, linguists, and so on. Other than the dialect work of Elmendorf and Suttles (1960) and Gerdts (1977), the only other pan-Halkomelem project is the ethnobotanical website spearheaded by Donna Gerdts and Brian Compton ([www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology](http://www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology)). At the community level, language workers from the three Halkomelem dialects met on October 20-21, 2000 and May 11-12, 2001 to determine how to work together on a common inter-intelligible language that we share. The group organized informally and called themselves *Q'ut Tu Squ'als*, meaning "Gathering of Languages." These meetings were a beginning toward creating a support network for sharing materials, techniques and ideas among the three sister dialects.

The following map shows the communities within the traditional Halq'eméylem speaking area.



Gerds and Compton [www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology](http://www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology)

Index: 1 Chawathil, 2 Skawahlook, 3 Ohamil, 4 Peters, 5 Seabird Island, 6 Popkum, 7 Cheam, 8 Skway, 9 Squiala, 10 Skwah, 11 Aitchelitz, 12 Kwawkwawapilt, 13 Yakweakwioose, 14 Skowkale, 15 Tzeachten, 16 Soowahlie

### *Halq'eméylem Origins*

Our Stó:lō origin stories tell us that we have lived on our land since *time immemorial*, while western science dates the earliest occupation of North America to approximately 15,000 years ago.<sup>10</sup> Stó:lō origin stories are centered on Xá:ls who brought order into the world, and Xá:ls

<sup>10</sup> Brian Thom. Stó:lō Culture - *Ideas of Prehistory and Changing Cultural Relationships to the Land and Environment*. Stó:lō Curriculum Consortium, <http://web20.mindlink.net/stolo/prehist.htm>. Date accessed, April 1998.

changed people into animals, plants and stones back and forth, and “and [many] Stó:lō have a special relationship to these natural resources, for they considered them their ancestors.”<sup>11</sup> They are stories about how we became fully human and connected to the world as we understand it today.

Western science’s story<sup>12</sup> tells that before 25,000 to 13,000 years ago the North American continent was covered with 1,000 meters of solid ice. Close to the end of that time frame, a large ice-free plain called the “Bering Land Bridge” connected eastern Siberia and western Alaska across the Bering Strait. It is believed that our earliest ancestors came across the Bering Strait, and that Aboriginal peoples have biological links to people in East Asia, as evidenced in our “shovel-shaped” front teeth, a genetically determined trait.

Nine thousand years ago salmon was an important food staple alongside land mammals, which made our ancestors distinct from other cultures in the New World and beyond. Our Stó:lō culture developed from a hunting-gathering lifestyle dependent upon fresh catches of fish and wildlife to complex communities of people, with social status and ranking systems, regional trade networks, and elaborate artistic and ritual life. The Stó:lō developed social classes, formed through inter-married family groups that gained wealth by controlling access to the best fishing, hunting and gathering locations. Radiocarbon dating, in the mid-1950’s placed the origin of the Salish people at the Lower Fraser Valley Canyon. Evidence showed that

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<sup>11</sup> Quote from Thom in Stó:lō *Traditional Culture: A Short Ethnography of the Stó:lō People*. <http://web20.mindlink.net/stolo/culture.htm>. Some people may dispute the Stó:lō belief that plants, animals and stones could be considered ancestors of the people (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)

<sup>12</sup> Thom, in same source as note 10, describes the major archaeological discoveries which include the Stó:lō area in *Summary of Major Cultural Trends and Changes* which I further summarize here.



people moved from the coast into the interior as the salmon shifted up the inland waterways.<sup>13</sup> Kroeber<sup>14</sup> dates Proto-Salish at 3,000 years ago based on differences in phonology and morphology; Swadesh<sup>15</sup> dates it at 6,000 years ago based on his glottochronological study. The archaeological and the linguistic evidence has never really been matched up... bones don't speak.

Early in the nineteenth century the Chilliwack people lived up the Chilliwack River in the mountains and spoke a dialect of Nooksack. Logjams caused the Chilliwack River to change its course and to flow north into the Fraser. The Chilliwack people then moved into the valley, and by the middle of the nineteenth century they had some twelve villages and started abandoning their original language for Halkomelem.<sup>16</sup> By the 1940's the Nooksack language was largely replaced by adjacent Upriver Halkomelem, the northern dialect of Northern Lushootseed, or English.

### ***Stó:lō Halq'eméylem Today***

Stó:lō organization today consists of a Stó:lō Nation Government which includes nineteen of twenty-four First Nation Bands within Stó:lō territory, as follows:<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> In Carlson (2001) Ed. *A Stó:lō – Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, in Plate 5 *Origins, The First Peopling of S'ólh T'érrécw*, the coastal origin of Salish people is discussed.

<sup>14</sup> Paul D Kroeber, (1999). *The Salish Language Family: Reconstructing Syntax*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press. (page 1.)

<sup>15</sup> Swadesh, Morris. (1950). *Salish Internal Relationships*. *International Journal of American Linguistics* Vol. 16, pp.157-67.

<sup>16</sup> Galloway (1985). *The Original Territory of the Nooksack Language*. *International Journal of American Linguistics*. 51 (4), p.416-418. Also cited in Wayne Suttles. (1990). *Central Coast Salish*. *North American Indian Handbook*. Volume 7, pp. 455-456.

<sup>17</sup> This list of Bands is from the Stó:lō Nation Government House Brochure, October 1996. \* Independent Stó:lō First Nations within the Upriver Halq'eméylem speaking area include Yale, Union Bar, Chehalis, Peters and Skwah.

Aitchelitz	Skawahlook	Scowlitz
Chawathil	Seabird Island	
Cheam	Skowkale	* Yale
Kwantlen	Skway	* Union Bar
Kwaw Kwaw Apilt	Soowahlie	* Peters
Lakahahmen	Squiala	* Chehalis
Matsqui	Sumas	* Skwah
Shxw'ow'hamel	Tzeachten	
Popkum	Yakweakwoose	(* Independent Stó:lō Bands)

"Stó:lō," our Halq'eméylem word meaning "River," is the collective name for all people whose Aboriginal Right it is to speak the Halq'eméylem language. Today, Stó:lō traditional territory covers an area of approximately 1.7 million hectares along the lower 190 km. of the Fraser River. The Fraser River and fishing are at the heart of Stó:lō culture.

Prior to European colonization it is estimated that there were 10,000 to 30,000 Halq'eméylem speakers,<sup>18</sup> which declined to about 1,300 by 1928. Today the Stó:lō population has steadily risen to the level of about 5,700 by 1993,<sup>19</sup> with only a handful of elders who speak the Halq'eméylem language fluently. English is used predominantly. In 1991, the entire First Nation and non-First Nation population in *S'ólh Téméxw*<sup>20</sup> in Stó:lō and Musqueam territory, was recorded at 2.7 million, and is projected to increase rapidly within the next ten years.

Our Stó:lō, or River, culture, Halq'eméylem and its direct ancestors evolved for 10,000 years in the Stó:lō area,<sup>21</sup> and within 200 years of European contact, our Halq'eméylem language was

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<sup>18</sup> Keith Thor Carlson. Ed. (1997). *You are Called to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History*. Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, p. 141.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. pp. 165-166.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. p. 53, Carlson notes that *S'ólh Téméxw* means "Our Land."

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 164.

nearly completely annihilated from ever being a spoken, functional thriving language again. For 200 years, the colonizers tried to make us forget who we were, in effect to make us all *st'áxem*,<sup>22</sup> “worthless people” who do not know our history. But despite the hardships of the past, we can now aspire to become *smé:l̓l̓h*,<sup>23</sup> “worthy people”, who know our history, who know our language. The Stó:lō are nearly 6,000 people strong now, a force to carry forward a legacy of 10,000 years of cultural development and change on *S'ólh Téméxw*, the land of the River People.

### ***Halq'eméylem Revival***

A key group of people in the Stó:lō community are aiming to reverse the process toward “language death<sup>24</sup>”, despite the fact that Halq'eméylem has been identified as one of the many Aboriginal languages in Canada headed for extinction.<sup>25</sup> We have a handful of older adults who speak Halq'eméylem fluently; three of them can also write in the language. These key people strive to revive the language with a determination that defies all predictions of extinction. These people have been active participants in the work of the Skulkayn Heritage Project of the early seventies, the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, and in the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq'eméylem Language Program.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 90

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 90

<sup>24</sup> Crystal states that a language is dead when no one speaks it anymore, and that even if there is one speaker left, it is dead because that speaker has no one with which to speak (p. 11).

<sup>25</sup> Michael K. Foster. (1982). *Indigenous Languages in Canada, Language and Society*. Ottawa: Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages.

The Coqualeetza Centre conducted a great deal of the earlier work with the Stó:lō elders, of documenting the language and developing language and culture resources for teaching. The linguist Brent Galloway, together with a team of elders, produced the writing system, the first linguistic grammar of Halq'eméylem, a 50-page grammatical sketch, a 3,000 word list and a 15,000-card dictionary and teaching materials. Adult courses, including three teacher training programmes for ten fluent speakers, were offered through a local college. The teacher training programmes included Edna Bobb, Nancy Phillips, Elizabeth Phillips, Tillie Gutierrez, all of whom became Halq'eméylem teachers and introduced the new writing system in the classroom. This led to local language courses for adults and children, but predominantly in the Band Schools.

However, two issues became evident. First, the School programs were highly influenced by a linguistic approach. Unfortunately, this type of programme, which stressed pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence patterns, failed to promote a strong understanding of the cultural aspects inherent in the language. Second, the elders were in the classrooms teaching the young children, but the parents were not able to reinforce the language at home. Thus, the language was not being transmitted and reinforced naturally from one generation to the next.

The Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Language Program began in 1995 as an endeavour to educate adults who would become fluent in Halq'eméylem, and who would pursue a course of study leading to a teaching certification. Shxweli means *spirit* or *life force*<sup>26</sup> in Halq'eméylem, and denotes a level of deep importance afforded the language renewal effort. By teaching the

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<sup>26</sup> Carlson, p.55

adults, the Shxweli program is addressing the missing link, the inter-generational gap evident in the previously mentioned school programs. However, we know very little about what learning the language means in the context of these peoples' lives; how they use it in the community; how they value it; how the language relates to the Stó:lō culture today. By examining the lived experience of the people, we can learn how the *spirit* or *life force* of the Stó:lō is reflected in their use of Halq'eméylem. In 1997 and 1998, I became more intimately aware of the language renewal effort while taking Halq'eméylem linguistics classes with the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Language Program located at the Coqualeetza grounds in Sardis, British Columbia, Canada.

My reasons for enrolling in the courses initially were purely selfish; I wanted to learn the language of my people, the Stó:lō. However, while observing my peers, and learning some of the intricate meanings of Halq'eméylem words through the elders, I was touched deeply by the experience. Sitting in a class of 25 Stó:lō people who were determined to learn the language to eventually become Halq'eméylem language teachers impacted powerfully on my sense of identity, on my understanding of what it means to be Stó:lō. Among my classmates, I discovered a reflection of myself that I had only experienced with my immediate family. They resembled me in many ways, in their quiet respectful accommodation, their easy laughter, and their mannerisms. They knew my relatives and shared with me what they knew about them. I was among kin who were as deeply concerned about reconnecting with our language, culture and identity as I was. I became interested in knowing more about what they were experiencing in learning Halq'eméylem, and in being involved with the language revival work. I determined

that I wanted to contribute to the Halq'eméylem renewal effort in some way, and that way became the work of this study.

### ***Research Method***

My entire study is truly an heuristic investigation, an internal search for understanding the phenomenon of how learning Halq'eméylem can provide a key to understanding my Stó:lō identity and worldview. Moustakas (1994) discusses heuristic research as

*... a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance...*

*Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovering a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experience<sup>27</sup>*

Issues of identity and worldview and how these are reflected in Aboriginal languages have been emphasized strongly as reasons why we might want to focus a great deal of energy, time and commitment to reviving Halq'eméylem. Thus, in my heuristic search, I investigate in some depth three topics related to these issues, incorporating personal reflections, literature and conversations with others. First, I explore what happened in the rise and demise of our language, and how what happened affected this Stó:lō person's life and identity reflected first in bewilderment and ambivalence and then in a growing pride in our Stó:lō heritage and

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<sup>27</sup> Clark Moustakas. (1994). *Phenomenological Research Methods*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, pp 17-18

language. I provide an account of my own experience from my earliest memories of Halq'eméylem to my developing passion to learn more about my people's language. Second, I begin to develop an understanding of a Stó:lō worldview by examining how Halq'eméylem expresses best the Stó:lō's relationship to the land, to S'ólh Téméxw, discovering how we, our word and our world blend intimately and spiritually. Third, I examine more closely how our culture, our identity and our worldview are embedded in words of the Halq'eméylem language to illustrate how Halq'eméylem brings these aspects into focus. These explorations stemmed from my need to know and understand what happened to our language in its demise and rise, to understand what the elders mean when they say "language is central to cultural identity and expresses the worldview of its speakers," and to understand what is meant when they say "language is a gift from the creator"<sup>28</sup>. By understanding these concepts, it becomes clearer how Halq'eméylem expresses intricate cultural nuances important to the Stó:lō. These concepts were important to this research in order to understand the background context of my co-researchers and myself, to provide a backdrop upon which to depict our experiences. My personal experience features largely in this research, and is supported in an heuristic approach. Moustakas (1994) says,

*The self of the researcher is present throughout the process and, while understanding the phenomenon with increasing depth, the researcher also experiences growing self-awareness and self-knowledge. Heuristic processes incorporate creative self-processes and self-discoveries.*<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> "Language is a Gift From the Creator" (1989) is the theme for the *Canadian Journal of Native Education*. Vol. 16, No.2. The theme is drawn from a quote by Chief Mike Mitchell, p1.

<sup>29</sup> Moustakas, p 17.

The co-researchers in my study include nine remarkable people who are, or have been, associated with the Skulkayn, Coqualeetza, and Shxweli programs, and who are dedicated to reviving the Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language. My main research question is:

- What does language renewal mean in the lives of the people whose language is being renewed? In this case, people of the Stó:lō community.

The purpose of my research is to tell the story of a community's drive to revive their language despite predictions for its extinction, to document what this effort means to a community of people who believe that without the language they will cease to be a unique people, and finally, to illustrate how this revival effort directly affects people's lives. I depict how specific events in the context of people's lives illustrate what is meant by "language is central to cultural identity," how, "language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective social adjustment," and the ways "language expresses the world view of its speakers." As such, I intend to reveal the ways in which language revitalization delivers the promises declared in the Stó:lō Halq'eméylem Language mission statement.

I intend to reveal what language renewal *means* to people and to their lives, what *inspires* people to learn "a language that is no longer a viable part of modern Indigenous lifestyles," and to reveal how the language *identifies* who we are in a contemporary context, how it reflects our *worldview* today. Thus, by examining meaning, value or inspiration, identity and worldview, I connect the use of Halq'eméylem to a contemporary cultural context.



Documenting what Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language renewal means in the context of people's lives contributes to the dearth of knowledge on language revival. Little is written about how individuals who make up the community are affected by the effort, about what inspires them against all odds, and in what ways language revival might restore wholeness to a community. By conducting this study, I want to reveal to the community the fruits of their labour. Other communities may become inspired to revive their own languages despite the difficulties and barriers they might face.

Maintaining and revitalizing our languages includes broader implications than benefiting our immediate welfare as Aboriginal peoples, because our welfare is humanity's welfare. Linguists often compare the loss of linguistic diversity in the world to the impact of the loss of flora and fauna to extinction, and its effect on humankind. The loss that is often referred to is the creative and intellectual capacities of the human collective.

*Language represents the most creative, persuasive aspects of culture, the most intimate side of the human mind. The loss of language diversity will mean that we will never even have the opportunity to appreciate the full creative capacities of the human mind (Mithun, 1998:189).<sup>30</sup>*

*The loss of linguistic diversity is a loss to scholarship and science. The scientific study of the mind is a venerable pursuit in human intellectual history, and the human capacity for language is the human mind's most prominent feature (Hale, 1998: 192).<sup>31</sup>*

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<sup>30</sup> Marianne Mithun, (1998). *The Significance of diversity in language endangerment and preservation*. In *Endangered Languages*. Ed. Lenore A. Grenoble & Lindsay J. Whaley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>31</sup> Ken Hale. (1998). *On endangered languages and the importance of linguistic diversity*. In *Endangered Languages*. Ed. Lenore A. Grenoble & Lindsay J. Whaley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 192.

*Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a mountainous and anonymous work of unconscious generations (Edward Sapir (1921:220))<sup>32</sup>*

By reading the story of Stó:lō Halq'eméylem renewal, others may gain increased understanding of the complexities and intricacies of reviving a near extinct language, of why it is so important to the people and to humanity generally. Greater understanding may garner greater moral and financial support for the effort.

### ***A Very Special Wild Strawberry Patch***

The story of Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language renewal is not meant to be only a documentation of facts. The story intends to serve as an act of “making special<sup>33</sup>” the meaning of Halq'eméylem renewal in our lives today by crafting it as an aesthetic experience.<sup>34</sup> “In the aesthetic experience, we can attain the important sense of coherence necessary for healing to occur.<sup>35</sup>” I intend my research to be a celebration of revival of our language and a celebration of the people who are working hard to make it happen. In the presentation of my research, I resonate the aesthetic “qualities”<sup>36</sup> of *beauty, celebration, triumph* and *power*, qualities of Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language renewal manifested in the lives of my co-researchers. “Wild strawberries” is a metaphor that weaves throughout this research on what Halq'eméylem

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<sup>32</sup> Crystal, p. 40.

<sup>33</sup> Carolyn Kenny. (1996). *The Dilemma of Uniqueness, An Essay on Consciousness and Qualities*. Nordic Journal of Music Therapy. Vol. 5, No. 2, p.94.

<sup>34</sup> The idea of incorporating aesthetic experience in my research was highly influenced by Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis (1997) method of *The Art and Science of Portraiture*, a method that explicitly “combines systematic, empirical description with aesthetic expression.” p. 3. Though aspects of the portraiture method resonated with what I wanted to do, its singular focus on narrative was limiting and I felt a more broadly based aesthetic approach was more useful for my heuristic inquiry.

<sup>35</sup> Kenny (1996).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid, p. 90

language renewal means to the Stó:lō in the context of their lives today. “Wild strawberries” is borrowed from the Cheam people in S’ólh Téméxw. The Halq’eméylem name for Cheam is *Xwébiyám* or *Chiyám* and translates as “*where there are always wild strawberries.*”

In my presentation of the research, I craft the co-researchers’ interviews into “poetic monologues,” keeping the co-researchers close to the depictions of their experience, true to an heuristic approach. According to Moustakas (1994),

*The research participants remain close to depictions of their experience, telling their individual stories with increasing understanding and insight... The depiction itself is complete... In organizing and synthesizing research data from heuristic studies, transcriptions of interviews, notes, poems, artwork, and personal documents are gathered together and organized by the investigator into a sequence that tells the story of each research participant (p.19)<sup>37</sup>.*

In a column alongside the “poetic monologues,” I present my own light interpretation of the co-researchers’ shared experiences. The co-researchers’ experiences represent a portrayal of their story, complete in itself, in vivid alive accurate and meaningful language.<sup>38</sup> Finally, I provide a composite depiction of the entire group of co-researchers.<sup>39</sup>

The co-researchers’ experiences illustrate that the promises promulgated in the Stó:lō mission statement are manifest in their lives as they learn Halq’eméylem and share what they know with others. In learning Halq’eméylem, the revivalists have developed a strong sense of Stó:lō identity, a deeper understanding of Riverworldview and increased pride and self-esteem in

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<sup>37</sup> Moustakas, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> Moustakas, p. 19.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

knowing these aspects of their rich Stó:lō heritage. The rewards far outweigh the challenges as the revivalists have shown great commitment and sacrifice in Halq'eméylem revival work. The younger revivalists show a deep respect and reverence toward the fluent speakers who kept the language “put away” in their hearts and minds, and understand the great responsibility they shoulder to learn what they can to carry it forward to future generations. The revivalists' greatest rewards are gained in hearing the children talk, sing and pray in Halq'eméylem.

I conclude that Halq'eméylem is indeed a part of modern Indigenous lifestyles and that the revivalists' tireless work is reversing the trend toward extinction of the Halq'eméylem language. The implications of Halq'eméylem revitalization is that the legacy of invention and creativity of a Riverworldview aesthetic can continue into the future, enabling us to appreciate the Stó:lō's contribution to the “full creative capacities of the human mind.” To cultivate this appreciation, our *Xwélməxwəjel* and our *Sxwəxwəyám* need to be learned by all our community members and incorporated in all our educational learning environments. Our language reflects an undeniable interconnectedness and interrelationship with our land, and understanding this fact is critical to negotiating Aboriginal rights and claims to S'ólh Téméxw and all it represents. More importantly, the Halq'eméylem revivalists' stories have shown us how reconnecting with our language can restore wholeness to ourselves as individuals, to the Stó:lō as a people and to the legacy of our entire Riverworldview.

In Chapter 2, I use the terms *st'áxcem* and *smelá:lh* which means “low class” or “worthless people” who have forgotten their history” and “upper-class” or “worthy people” who know their history respectively as metaphors that weave through the history of language loss and the resulting revitalization

efforts. *St'áxcem* and *smelá:lh* are used as metaphors for the effects of Canada's practiced government assimilation policies, and our efforts to transcend their effects. My own story as a Stó:lō of not knowing my history and my journey to learning it illustrates how the *st'áxcem* and *smelá:lh* metaphors manifest in lived experience. The section "Xá:ls and Worlds of Chaos" highlights the chaos brought to our Stó:lō world during the overt assimilationist period, reminding us of a time of chaos we knew once before. In "Putting things right," I discuss how Aboriginal people united against the 1969 White Paper Policy, marking a turning point in our recent history when Aboriginal people began to openly assert our Aboriginal Rights and practices against overt assimilation policies. This section is meant to illuminate the socio-politico-historical context in which our experiences manifest.

In Chapter 3, I set the Halq'eméylem renewal effort in its physical context by drawing the reader into the land of S'ólh Téméxw, the land of the Stó:lō. Here, I explore the Stó:lō people's worldview defined by our traditional relationship with S'ólh Téméxw, a spiritual relationship bound by *smstá:xcw*, the power of vitality, thought and will shared in all of nature. This Indigenous "harmony with" philosophy, in contrast to a Western "power over" paradigm, sets us worlds apart from the West in terms of how we relate to each other and our environment. Our *sxwá:xcwá:ym*, our creation stories that tell all of life's teachings revealed at the time of creation, incorporates our Stó:lō worldview. Three stories of Cheam, *Xwá:stó:m* or *Óhjá:m*, a "place to always get wild strawberries," convey the Stó:lō's intimate identification with the plants, animals and natural resources in S'ólh Téméxw. Our *sxwá:xcwá:ym* and our relationship with S'ólh Téméxw are best expressed in our *Xwélmexwqel*, our Halq'eméylem

language - the most important assertion of our uniqueness. Despite the strong Xwelítem influence on our language and lives, the Halq'eméylem word warriors' efforts are beginning to breathe the Shxwelí of our ancestors throughout S'ólh Téméxw.

Chapter 4 affirms that in the minds of Aboriginal peoples, language, identity and worldview are understood to be inextricably interconnected, and by reconnecting with what that means, we may restore wholeness to our communities from the trauma created by the erosion of our languages. The first and most obvious way that our Halq'eméylem language connects us to our identity is in the term we call ourselves, Stó:lō, or River, which is central to our lifeway and our culture. In essence, the place where the River People and River environment intersect is where we derive our understanding of creation, and our Halq'eméylem language is its best expression. River world ways permeate the Halq'eméylem language, blended in terms for time, in general directional terms, and in human body parts. Terms for animals incorporate word pictures related to Stó:lō creation stories. By breathing life into our Halq'eméylem language, we aim to reconnect with our collective memory that is distinctively Stó:lō, to reconnect with who we are as defined by our ancestors and their relationship to the River, to achieve the wholeness for which we yearn.

Chapter 5 “*Iyólem, Éyqálha, Yúzwqálha*” explores philosophical views of *aesthetics*, the approach I use to conduct and present my research. I draw on Kenny's concepts of “humans as aesthetic” to establish the nature of the relationship between myself as researcher and my participants as co-researchers in this study. In particular, the assumption made that “as one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness, or fullest potential of what one can be in

the world,” befits my research of what Halq’eméylem means in the lives of people who are working to revive it to bring wholeness to their lives as Stó:lō people. I conduct an heuristic thought experiment of this Stó:lō person’s aesthetic perspective and arrive at my own definition of aesthetic as an “intuitive synchronicity.” I pose that using a creative expression format to present my research provides a medium for involving the reader in a dynamic of “play.”

In Chapter 6, *Picking Wild Strawberries*, refers to how I approach acquiring and presenting the richly shared experiences of my co-researchers, including a protocol established with Stó:lō Nation to conduct the research. I explain my methodological use of heuristics as my approach for setting the context for the study, and my use of “portraiture” as a method that combines academic rigour and creative expression in the presentation of my research. I discuss the development of an aesthetic approach for establishing my relationship with the co-researchers and presenting their thoughts as “poetic monologues” to involve the reader in a dynamic of play. The nine co-researchers are represented in three categories of people involved in the Halq’eméylem revival work: Elders, Junior Elders and Parents with Children at Home.

Chapter 7, *A Basket of Wild Strawberries*, includes nine “poetic monologues” created from the interviews with the co-researchers. Juxtaposed to the “poetic monologues, I present a light interpretation of what the co-researchers shared. The “poetic monologues” include “*Signed, te’ si:yáye, your friend*” by Katelíla ; “*Teach the Children With Love*” by Koyàlemót; “*A reawakening of what’s there*” by Tyrone; “*It just has to bust through.*” by Xwelíxwiya ; “*... In my mind, I can do it*” by

Kwósel; “*We have a beautiful dream*” by T’ít’elem Spá:th; “*Just going to teach my little girl*” By Épelel ; “*They went and taught on their own.*” by Siyàmiyatéliyot; and “*I was going to be stubborn*” by Yómalot.

Chapter 8, Dessert of Wild Strawberries, presents a composite description of the entire group of co-researchers, illustrating how their experiences manifest the promises promulgated in the Stó:lō Nation’s mission statement, in a stronger understanding of a Stó:lō identity and worldview and increased self-esteem and pride. I conclude that Halq’eméylem is part of modern Indigenous lifestyles, and that the Halq’eméylem revivalists’ experiences reflect a movement of reversing the trend toward Halq’eméylem extinction. Their stories have shown us how reconnecting with our language can restore wholeness to ourselves as individuals, to the Stó:lō as a people and to the legacy of our entire Riverworldview. Halq’eméylem revitalization and its legacy of thousands upon thousands of years of a Riverworldview aesthetic will be enabled to continue into the future, continuing to contribute to the “full creative capacities of the human mind.”



## Chapter 2

### TE ST'ÁXEM QAS TE SMELÁ:LH

*St'áxem*, lower class person, or person who does not know their history, describes an aspect of many Stó:lō people's lives, in that we know little about our rich cultural heritage and language as a result of Canada's past assimilation policies. *Smelá:lh*, a high-class person, or a person who knows their history, refers here to learning who we are by reconnecting with our language and culture, and thereby strengthening our identity as Stó:lō people.

In this chapter, I discuss the demise of Halq'eméylem and efforts to “preserve” the language of a “dying race,” to the rise of Halq'eméylem in community efforts to restore it to “the ‘normal’ language of family and community” once again. The demise of Halq'eméylem, brought about largely through the residential school system, wrought the destruction of family, the most powerful means by which language and culture is transmitted. Without understanding our identity, language and culture, many of us, confused and ambivalent about who we were, were unable to develop self-esteem, pride in being Stó:lō. How then, it is asked, can restoring the language, restore wholeness to the community? I provide an heuristic account of how *st'áxem* and *smelá:lh* featured in my life experiences from a time when to be an “Indian” was disdained to a time when we could openly and proudly express our cultural traditions. The reversal of the White paper policy was a key to the change in Aboriginal peoples' lives as reflected in this Stó:lō person's life experiences and in the “poetic monologues” of my co-researchers depicted later. The challenge remains in how we can pick

up the pieces of our shattered language to revitalize it to functional utility once again. I am learning that it is the responsibility of each and every one of us who is concerned about our Aboriginal language to explore the deepest recesses of our soul to know what it means for us personally to be committed to the renewal effort.

### ***The Demise and Rise of Halq'eméylem***

My investigation into Halq'eméylem began when I was a first year student in the Native Indian Teacher Education Program (NITEP) at UBC<sup>40</sup>. My motivation for writing a paper on the topic was born from my desire to learn my own people's language, and finding no materials for learning it anywhere. Finally, in 1979, I was introduced, through the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, to a file cabinet of research on Halq'eméylem. I discovered that works on Halq'eméylem and on the culture of Stó:lō people began at a time when Aboriginal people in Canada were thought to be a dying race<sup>41</sup>, or that works were documented by missionaries who sought to save the souls of the people by teaching them the word of "God" in our own language<sup>42</sup>. I found little material on Halq'eméylem that was written after 1909, and then discovered the **Sepass Tales** (1957), documented by Eloise Street for Chief Sepass who was concerned that his people's culture was giving way to "white man's ways"<sup>43</sup>. A list of

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<sup>40</sup> Ethel B. Gardner. (1979). *Halkomelem Language and People*. Vancouver: Unpublished student paper for the course Indian Studies 141: University of British Columbia.

<sup>41</sup> Franz Boas. (1895). **Indian Legends of the North Pacific Coast**. Berlin: A. Asher & Co; ----. (1890). **Fieldnotes on Halkomelem Scowlitz Dialect**. American Philosophical Society; Charles Hill-Tout. (1904). **Ethnological Report on SteEliis and Skaulits Tribes**. London: Harrison and Sons; ----. (1902). *Ethnological Studies of the Mainland Halkomelem, a division of the Salish of British Columbia*. In the **Report on the Ethnological Survey of Canada** by the British Association for the Advancement of Science.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Crosby. (1907). **Among the An-ko-me-num**. Toronto: William Briggs; ----. (1898). **Indian Methodist Hymn Book**. Chilliwack: Charles M. Tate.

<sup>43</sup> Eloise Street. (1963). **Sepass Tales, Songs of Y-Ail-Mihth**. Chilliwack: Sepass Trust.

vocabulary in Halkomelem was recorded during the translation of Chief Sepass' songs. Finally, Oliver N. Wells (1965)<sup>44</sup>, who believed that much of the Stó:lō culture was being lost with the passing of the language, published a little book of vocabulary in the Halkomelem language in hope that it would stimulate the people to learn the language, and serve to help preserve it. Oliver and his brother Casey Wells developed a Practical Phonetics System that would enable writing the words so they could be pronounced correctly. The System did not require the use of phonetic characters, which are not usually understood by the average reader, and it could be produced in ordinary type. Up to this point, works "about" the language were documented to preserve it, or to "convert" the "heathens," and finally to make it accessible to the people whose language was being documented.

While the Aboriginal languages were being documented and while the Indians' souls were being "saved" by Christian missionaries, their languages and cultures were being undermined by government policies to assimilate them into Canadian society<sup>45</sup>. Here, we enter one of the darkest eras in the history of the Aboriginal peoples of this land - the era of the residential schools, where eradication of First Nations languages in favour of English was cruelly and coercively promoted. As late as the fifties and sixties, the "English only" policy continued to be implemented in residential schools even though children could speak only a little of their language. The residential school system was the single most powerful force in achieving near

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<sup>44</sup> Oliver Wells. (1965). *A Vocabulary of Native Words in the Halkomelem Language as used by the Native People of the Lower Fraser Valley*, B.C. Sardis: Oliver Wells.

<sup>45</sup> Ethel B. Gardner & Mandy Jimmy. (1989). *Recognition and Legitimation of First Nations Languages: B.C. Challenge*. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*. Vol. 16, No. 2; Carlson, 1997.

extinction of First Nations languages in British Columbia<sup>46</sup>, and its most devastating legacy was the “destruction of family<sup>47</sup>,” the most powerful means by which language and culture is transmitted.

By the 1950's Aboriginal people began to articulate their dissatisfaction with the residential school system, and the injustices of the system, which became more apparent to the general public, made it difficult to defend their continuing existence<sup>48</sup>. Aboriginal children were then integrated into the public school system with little concern for including their language, culture, heritage and history in the curriculum<sup>49</sup>. Integration served to further erode the Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language and culture.

A movement to reverse Aboriginal language and cultural loss in Canada escalated with reaction against the 1969 white paper, a government document which proposed to extinguish special rights for Indians. The white paper stirred the Aboriginal communities across Canada to join forces in opposing extinguishment. One of the results was the development of a policy document by the National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) called **Indian Control of Indian Education** in 1972. The NIB paper which was accepted in principle by the government, promoted among other educational endeavours, a call for funds to support language revitalization efforts. Further, the white paper supported the funding of cultural centres for the

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<sup>46</sup> Gardner & Jimmy, p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> Carlson, p. 102.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p. 103

<sup>49</sup> Harry B. Hawthorn. (1960). *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary and Social Adjustment*. Toronto, Vancouver: University of Toronto Press and the University of British Columbia.

development and preservation of First Nations cultures and languages<sup>50</sup>. The Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, which began as a B.C. Provincial Cultural Centre, established in 1973, aimed to preserve and promote Stó:lō culture and language.

In the meantime, little attention had been paid to Halq'eméylem language revival since the Wells (1965) work, until 1972, when members from the Skulkayn Band acquired some funding through Canada Manpower's Local Initiatives Program. Through this funding, the Skulkayn Heritage Project, administered and staffed by local Stó:lō people, began collecting data on language and culture from 1972 to 1974. In 1970, Brent Galloway began research on Halq'eméylem, continued from 1975 to 1981 at Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, and continues to work on the language<sup>51</sup>.

Galloway's work proved to be very useful for establishing Band School language programs. Siyámtelet<sup>52</sup> notes that language retention programs in the Band Schools were highly influenced by the linguistic approach, which in the 1970s was thought to be the state-of-the art and the best method. Teaching techniques which focussed on grammar, sounds, drill and correction, did not promote understanding of the cultural identity, meaning or significance inherent in the language. My own observations of a community school's language program corroborate some of Siyámtelet concerns. In my study of *Seabird Island Community School: Unique Features of an Indian Band School*, I discovered that the students were learning

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<sup>50</sup> Gardner & Jimmy, p. 3

<sup>51</sup>Galloway (1988). *The Upriver Halq'eméylem Language Program at Coqualeetza*. Human Organization. Vol. 47, No. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Siyamtelet (Shirley D. Leon). (1987). *Language is Culture, Culture is Language (memorandum)*. Sardis: Coqualeetza Education Training Centre.

Halq'eméylem everyday from elders, but only for about 15 minutes for kindergartners and ½ hour per day for older students. The parents, however, knew very little, if any of the language to be able to reinforce it at home<sup>53</sup>. Thus, we encounter an intergenerational gap, a missing link of the natural transmission of the language from parent to child. However, in the 1970s and 1980s, few if any Stó:lō parents were found who could commit to a sustained set of Halq'eméylem classes for several years to learn the language from scratch (Galloway 2002, p.c.).

In 1995, a small group of Stó:lō community members began the arduous task, with support from the Chilliwack School District, of establishing a program for adults who would commit themselves to learning Stó:lō Halq'eméylem to eventually become Halq'eméylem teachers. This effort came to be named the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq'eméylem Language Program. This program spawned a number of initiatives, including four levels of Halq'eméylem language for community members, and a Halq'eméylem Linguistics Proficiency Diploma program where participants learned linguistics, cultural anthropology and teaching methods. Shxwelí Program participants completed the Native Adult Instructors Diploma Program (NAID), which focussed on how to teach Halq'eméylem and included a practicum experience. The Shxwelí Program is now implementing a longer term goal of establishing fluency in Halq'eméylem for its adult participants in the Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency Program. Finally, in partnership with the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University, Stó:lō Nation will be able to offer a university-accredited Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in

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<sup>53</sup> Ethel B. Gardner. (1986). *Unique Features of a Band-Controlled School: The Seabird Island Community School*. Canadian Journal of Native Education. Vol. 13, No. 1, pp 15-32.

Halq'eméylem Language and Culture<sup>54</sup>. The DSTC is designed to lead to a full professional teaching certificate for teaching kindergarten to grade seven.

The Halq'eméylem revival movement is happening within a larger revival movement throughout Canada and B.C. of Aboriginal peoples working to revitalize their languages. Aboriginal language communities compete for federal and provincial dollars targeted for Aboriginal languages that often fall short of the needs and requirements of the communities. Sponsorship toward preservation of the Halq'eméylem language have included: the Indian Studies Support Program/The First Peoples Cultural Foundation/The BC Ministry of Education Skills and Training/BC Heritage Language Program/The Chilliwack, Hope, Langley, Mission and Abbotsford School Districts. Individual Stó:lō First Nations also contribute cultural dollars from their budgets toward Halq'eméylem revitalization.<sup>55</sup> Additionally, the Stó:lō Shxweli conduct their own fundraising locally to purchase class jackets and pay for luncheons, Salmon Bar-B-Ques and other expenses.<sup>56</sup>

Halq'eméylem revival activities stretch beyond the programs and individual local communities. The twenty-four Stó:lō Bands who may not always see eye to eye politically, agree that all must work together toward the common goal of Halq'eméylem revitalization. The *Lalens̓ ye*

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<sup>54</sup> On December 6, 1999, the British Columbia College of Teachers approved a proposal for a DSTC Program in Halq'eméylem Language and Culture. The program, submitted by Stó:lō Nation in partnership with Simon Fraser University, allows teacher training geared specifically for language and culture to be offered in a flexible manner. Participants in the program undertake 45 credits in language and culture. The proposal includes the four levels of community Halq'eméylem courses, Halq'eméylem Linguistics Proficiency Certificate (SCES), and the Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency courses.

<sup>55</sup> T'it'elem Spath – Eddie Gardner. (April 6, 1998). *Ay Lexw̓ te Stó:lō Shxweli, the Spirit of the Stó:lō Lives. Sqw̓elqw̓els ye Stó:lō, True Stories of the Stó:lō Nation..* Vol. 1, Issue 2.

*Selyálexwə*, House of Elders of Stó:lō Nation government called on all the people within all twenty-four Stó:lō Bands to unite to work together toward revitalizing our language. A meeting was convened on November 17, 2000, at the Stó:lō Government House inviting people involved in language initiatives within all twenty-four Stó:lō Bands.<sup>57</sup> *Te Sqweltaletset Sq'ep*, Our Language Group, was formed, and a celebration of Stó:lō language and culture was held June 13, 2001 at the Richard Malloway Memorial Longhouse. On October 20-21, 2000 and May 11-12, 2001, language workers from the three Halkomelem dialects met in Nanaimo hosted by the Snuneymuxw Band, to determine how to work together as a common inter-intelligible language. This group called themselves *Qpux Tu Sqwels*. Halq'eméylem workers attend meetings regarding the larger Salishan language family group, for example, that of the Salishan Language Conference, which the Stó:lō hosted in partnership with the University of British Columbia on August 8-10, 2001.<sup>58</sup>

Further networking is made possible through the Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee of the First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC), a provincial organization of Aboriginal people who work in First Nations education in B.C. The FNESC Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee negotiated a framework with the BC College of Teachers for an Interim Teaching Certificate and a Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in First Nations Language

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<sup>56</sup> Marianne Ignace. (1998). *The Handbook for Aboriginal Language Program Planning in British Columbia*, A Report prepared for the First Nations Education Steering Committee Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee, p. 84.

<sup>57</sup> Ethel B. Gardner. (2000). *Upriver Halq'eméylem Gathering Report*. Notes of meeting held November 17, 2000 held at Stó:lō Government House in Sardis, B.C.

<sup>58</sup> Ethel B. Gardner. (2001). *Halq'eméylem Language Activities*. A document prepared for and distributed at the Te Sqweltaletset Sq'ep gathering to celebrate Stó:lō language and culture held June 13, 2001 at the Richard Malloway Memorial Longhouse in Sardis.



and Culture. Stó:lō Nation is represented on the Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee, which enables them to network with other language groups and organizations in B.C., nationally and internationally.

Stó:lō Nation can look locally, nationally and internationally to exemplary language revitalization initiatives upon which to model their own when the conditions and climate are right. The Te Kohanga Reo language nests of the Maori are often looked to as an ideal model described as follows:

*A kohanga reo is a whanau/family base where a deliberate effort is made to create a Maori cultural environment, in which Maori language values and customs are naturally acquired by preschool children from their kaumatua (elders). Through the example of the whanau the children learn aroha (love and compassion), manaakitanga (caring, hospitality), whanaungatanga (family responsibilities) and they are taught traditional knowledge, crafts and customs, all through the medium of the Maori language.<sup>59</sup>*

Unfortunately, at this time, Stó:lō have too few elders and fluent speakers to replicate *kohanga reo* in the manner described above. However, at the Chawathil First Nation, some form of replication is being attempted by having babies in their Headstart program listen to audiotapes in Halq'eméylem.<sup>60</sup> Another exemplary model exists in the Kahnawake Mohawk immersion program, the first Aboriginal language immersion program in Canada, modelled on French immersion programs in Quebec.<sup>61</sup> In B.C. the Chief Arahm School located on the Adams Lake Reserve in the Shuswap Nation first operated a “Language nest” daycare, and by 1998

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<sup>59</sup> Ignace, p. 50.

<sup>60</sup> Ethel Gardner, 2000. p. 5.

<sup>61</sup> Ignace, p. 35.

evolved into a Band Operated School with full immersion instruction for 38 students enrolled in grades K-12.<sup>62</sup> Stó:lō communities require speakers who are highly fluent in Halq'eméylem to attempt in any significant way the exemplary models discussed here, and are working to remedy the situation in this respect.

Despite the challenge of not having many highly fluent speakers, Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language initiatives are now offered in communities, in public and Band schools, and include a program for developing a pool of highly fluent adults who will bear the responsibility for carrying the language to future generations. All of these activities are important for reviving Halq'eméylem to “a state where it is once again the normal language of family and community.”<sup>63</sup> These activities, and others, serve to increase the visibility and prestige of the language within the community<sup>64</sup>, and promote *community use* of the language – the ultimate guarantee of its vitality<sup>65</sup>.

The most effective strategy for promoting wide-spread community use would be to make the goal of the Halq'eméylem renewal effort a goal of contributing to restoring the mental, spiritual, physical and emotional wholeness of the community.<sup>66</sup> We need to recognize what a huge role language plays in understanding who we are as Stó:lō people and to understand the huge void created in our lives and communities with language loss. With language loss we lost

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<sup>62</sup> Ignace, p. 59.

<sup>63</sup> Mark Fettes. (1992). *A Guide to Language Strategies for First Nations Communities*. Ottawa: Assembly of First Nations Language and Literacy Secretariat.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, p. 10

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p. 20

<sup>66</sup> Ibid, p. 3

our connection with our cultural heritage and with the land. By regaining our language as individuals, we can regain that sense of connection as a people, and as a community. Suppression of the language, as stated earlier, and the way in which it was done, did indeed create family and community dysfunction in the process of enforcing a barrier to the natural transmission of the language and culture from one generation to the next. This fact begs the question: Can restoring the language restore wholeness to our community? We can know this by understanding how restoring the language manifests in the lives of the people in the community.

Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language revival is an evolving process, so it is not likely that we will find it at this point being “the ‘normal’ language of family and community.” In my study, I intend to shed light on how Halq'eméylem evolved in the context of Stó:lō peoples' lived experiences. In the next section, I offer my own account of how Halq'eméylem evolved in my life from having heard only a few phrases at one time to developing a burning desire to learn all I could about this language that, in the words of the elders, identifies who I am as a Stó:lō person.

### ***Sqwèlqwèl<sup>67</sup> the Ethel: Unlearning St'áxem***

“Please sing ‘My Home by the Fraser,’ Mom,” I would ask repeatedly. And Mom would humour me. The song raised images I remembered of Hope, B.C., of the mountains and lakes and rivers, of the wild flowers, berries, salmon and oolichans. We were called the “half-breeds who lived down the hill.” We lived on the margins of the town, in a house my father built

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<sup>67</sup> Sqwèlqwèl and Sgwōgwiyám are described in the section called “Spoken Literature: Stó:lō Oral Narratives” written by M. Teresa Carlson, Keith Thor Carlson, Brian Thom & “Sonny” McHalsie, May 1996. Sqwèlqwèl is a category of Stó:lō oral narratives which deal with contemporary or recent history rather than with the time of the transformer Xá:ls.

himself. Even today, some people remember the little slope at the end of Wallace Street as Gardner's Hill. Our food staple was mainly salmon, salmon prepared in every way imaginable, salmon three times a day. And then, when the oolichans ran, we ate nothing but oolichans for a while. This diet seemed really quite normal to me, the only diet I knew. We would play by the creeks and the lakes, and we would often go to Kawkawa Lake for swims, and for picnics. All these things seemed pretty normal to me. Our little neighbour friends came to play with us, and we were oblivious to the differences, except for one that I remember. We would never have shoes. Our friends wanted to be like us, and would take off their socks and shoes, but their feet would hurt when we played on the dirt road, the pebbles hurt their feet. Our soles had become tough. We liked who we were then.

But our souls would soon become fragile. Going to school, we learned that we were different. One day walking home from school, my playmate stopped us in our tracks and said: "Look at our hands! Our hands are different colours. Mine are light and yours are dark!" And more and more, it became apparent that we were dark and that it mattered. I remember when I went to the hospital to get my tonsils out, and one of the other children cried and cried, until finally she was moved to another room where there were no "Indians."

"What are you doing?" my older sister said to me one day when I was about six years old. "I am washing my hands," I said. "But, you have been washing and washing and washing," she said, "Why are you doing that?" "Because I want them to be nice and white like my mother's," I said. Well, my mother's hands were not white at all, but they sure were not as brown as my dark little suntanned hands. How soon we learned that "white is right."

“*Sauvage! Sauvage!*,” came the words in a tone that meant the caller was aiming to hurt. My siblings and I and my Mom were taken to a faraway land, far away from the salmon, far from the familiar lakes and streams to a foreign place. The place was cold, the language was French. We lived in Sept-Iles, Quebec, for most of my growing years. My siblings and I often talked about the fond memories we cherished of our “home by the Fraser.” Living in Sept-Iles, away from our homeland, was lonely, if only for the familiar environment we knew, and to be close to relatives and others who were more like us than anyone we knew there. Yes, in Sept-Iles, there were “Indians.” They were called the Montagnais then, and now they call themselves the Innu, not Inuit, but Innu. They lived on a reserve right at the edge of the city, and they spoke their own language, and French. We were separated by language, at first. Later, we would be able to communicate with each other in French, the language of Canada’s other “founders.”

Dad was upwardly mobile as an employee of the Quebec North Shore & Labrador Railroad where he was promoted from labourer, to foreman, and on to Roadmaster. Being an Anglophone was a boon in this way, which proved to be economically beneficial for our family, better than for many of the Innu and French Canadians who mainly worked as labourers. Being “half-breed” would prove to be a bane.

We never seemed to fit in anywhere. We were Indians, but not Montagnais. We were apparently Scottish, but not white. When we came home crying because our playmates would taunt us with the familiar refrain, “Indian! Indian!” Dad would reassure us that we were not “Indians.” He would tell us that we were “half-breeds” and that we were Scottish. We could take some solace in being only “half” Indian, as it was only half bad to our ‘friends’ who were

able to rationalize that it would be okay to associate with our white half, I guess. That idea would only be half insulting to us, but nonetheless gave us some immediate respite from being completely excluded from having playmates. In reality, Dad was right in saying that we were not “Indians.” Legally right, that is. We were not “Indians” according to the Indian Act. His father gave up his Indian “status” to own land, to vote and to be allowed to drink alcohol with his buddies, none of which were allowed if you were an “Indian” under the Act. In effect, we were *st’áxcem*, “worthless people” who did not know their history. And such was our status in society.

The word “Stó:lō” was never spoken in our home. My parents were not ashamed of it in any way; they simply did not know the term. Nor was it ever understood that our Stó:lō language was called Halq’eméylem. At home, Dad felt free to banter around with Mom in the few phrases of Halq’eméylem that he knew. Mom never spoke it, but understood what my Dad was saying. Sometimes he would call us “re-e-al *Xwélmexw*,”<sup>68</sup> and told us that it meant we were re-e-al Indians. I guessed that being re-e-al Indians was different than being just Indian. On a very private level, I knew that he meant we should be proud to be *Xwélmexw*, but that in public we should know that to be “Indian” was to be disdained. At home I felt proud and distinct to be *Xwélmexw*, to be real. Mom and Dad and most of my siblings gradually moved back to British Columbia, to our homeland, and in 1975 I joined them. I longed to know who

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<sup>68</sup> According to linguist Donna Gerds, “real people” is actually the literal translation of the term “*Xwélmexw*” and that it refers more specifically to a cultural group, such as Coast Salish rather than to all “Indians.” In *Tó:lméls Ye Siyelyólexwa, Wisdom of the Elders, a Halq’eméylem Classified Word List*, (1980), Coqualeetza Education Training Centre, “*Xwélmexw*” is listed as meaning “Indian,” and in Brent Galloway’s (1999). *Finderlist for Upriver Halq’eméylem*, “*Xwélmexw*” is listed as referring generally to mean North American Indian

I was, and unknown to me at that time, that longing meant I wanted to be *smelá:lh*, a “worthy person,” a person who knows her history.

In 1977, when I discovered the Native Indian Teacher Education (NITEP) Program at UBC, my quest began in earnest to know the story of what happened to us as “Indian” people, as *Xwélmexw*. When I first laid eyes on NITEP’s little brochure, the words **Indian Studies** stood out. Wow, I thought, an opportunity to learn something about “re-a-al Indians.” The brochure also stated that the Indian students would study together in a field center for two years before going on to the University of British Columbia (UBC) campus. That setup appealed to me enormously, and I was in awe that even going to university was an option for me. I applied to NITEP, and was accepted. Learning about Indians with other Indians instilled in me a sense of comfort and acceptance as I had never known in my entire life. And so began my journey, not to just become an elementary school teacher, but also to learn what it meant to be Stó:lō, to be *Xwélmexw*. The learning would come from books, and also from the many community connections we would make through the NITEP Program. Ironically, education, which served as a tool to eradicate our *Xwélmexw* identity, would now serve to strengthen it.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Roland Chrisjohn, Sherry Young and Michael Maraun. (1997). *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*. Penticton: Theytus Books. The authors called residential schools “total institutions” which served to produce not a new self, but a no self at all among its inmates, the student populations. This effect carried over into society at large, in my experience.

I decided that I wanted to learn the language of my people whom I discovered were called Stó:lō, the River People, and who spoke the Upriver dialect of the Halkomelem language<sup>70</sup>. I had a fairly good command of the English language and had a good level of fluency in French having learned it in school, in social settings and in work settings while living in Quebec. I thought I had a knack for learning languages since French came easily. Naively, I looked in all the major bookstores. Nothing. Then I looked in the public library. Nothing. How could it be? Nothing, anywhere. This invisibility of my people's language was my first lesson in how little our *Xwélmexw* languages were valued in Canadian society, and further evidence of our *st'áxcem* status.

What on earth happened? I wanted to know why it was that I could find ample materials on so many European languages, Asian languages, and even some books on Mayan. And none on the language of the Stó:lō people. Why was it that most of the *Xwélmexw* I met did not speak our language? The Innu in Sept-Iles spoke their own language before they learned French. As I pursued my post-secondary education, I began to learn why. I began to learn the story about my people, about how we were nearly completely decimated by diseases that arrived before its carriers, the colonizers, who would attempt to annihilate us out of existence through assimilationist policies and laws.<sup>71</sup> It became clear to me that this story was about

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<sup>70</sup> Wilson Duff. (1952). *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser River of B.C.* Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, This book was my first introduction to information about Stó:lō heritage.

<sup>71</sup> Carlson. In Chapter 2 "*First Contact: Smallpox: a sickness that no medicine could cure, and no person escape*" deals entirely with the smallpox epidemic, its arrival and its impact. Chapter 5 addresses the government instituted laws and policies aimed at assimilating Aboriginal people.



power, “the capacity to influence or force others to behave in prescribed ways.”<sup>72</sup> Abuse of power was tempered in Stó:lō culture, tempered by the wisdom and teachings of thousands of years. Within the Stó:lō culture, there exists a wonderful story about power and influence, and that is, the story of Xá:ls,<sup>73</sup> which told us who we were as Stó:lō people and how we should conduct ourselves. This code of conduct served us well until the arrival in our midst of the Xwelítem, and our Stó:lō world as we knew it would never be the same thereafter.

### **Xá:ls and Worlds of Chaos: Xwelítem Encounter**

The story of Xá:ls brings us as far back in time as any Stó:lō can fathom. Xá:ls came into the world at a time when there was little order, at a time when evil spirits, people with power, animal people, deformed men and other creatures prevailed. *Chíbelh Sijám*, the Great Spirit, creator of the earth and humanity, sent Xá:ls to earth in order “to put things right.” A Stó:lō elder puts it this way:

*Xá:ls is the Little Christ... There was a time when the world was a lot different than it is now. Many things were with power, both people and animals and other beings. Many people could create things their own way. If a man wanted a deer, he could fix it or wish it; he didn't have to hunt for it. Others could see things before they happened and others were gifted with the powers of transformation. God didn't like this so he sent Xá:ls, the Little Christ, down to make things right. Some people were too smart and abused their power so God sent Xá:ls down to destroy those who were powerful (AK, 1985 cited in Mohs, 1990:6).<sup>74</sup>*

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<sup>72</sup> Charles V. Willie. *Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: A Theoretical Analysis of Their Interrelationship*. Bayside, New York 11360: General Hall, Inc. 1983.

<sup>73</sup> Xá:ls is mentioned in a number of sources, by Street, Mohs, Carlson and Thom.

<sup>74</sup> Gordon Mohs. (1990). *Stó:lō Sacred Ground*. For: World Archaeological Congress II, Barquisimeto, Venezuela, September 4-8.

The stories of the time of Xá:ls are called Sxw̓xw̓yám<sup>75</sup> and tell about who we are as Stó:lō people, about how we should conduct ourselves and of the consequences of not conducting ourselves properly. These stories are our Stó:lō stories, not stories of origin such as the Judeo-Christian Genesis story, but of a myth-age world, stories with mystery beyond our ken. Sxw̓xw̓yám acknowledges people who lived before the “first people.” Each community’s origin story tells of a time of tragedy when nearly all the people in the Fraser Valley die, leaving only one man and one woman alive. These two survivors, who resided in separate villages, eventually find one another and repopulate the land thereby becoming the “first people.” Sxw̓xw̓yám served us well and taught us:

*the fundamental values and accepted behaviour of the Stó:lō (for example, why gluttony and laziness are unacceptable, and the risks of sexual promiscuity). In other words, how to live*

*the chaotic nature of the world during the period which existed before the arrival of the Xé:á:ls, and therefore, the necessity of the appearance of Xé:á:ls “to make the world right.”*

*the emergence/origin/growth of a community of people (for instance, the “original” ancestors of the Katzie people.*

*explanations for the intimate kinship (relations) between certain resources and various Stó:lō communities, (i.e. cedar trees, sturgeon, and sockeye salmon) and also explanations for the origins of specific geographical features (i.e. a large stone or whirlpool in a certain part of the river).*

*the origin and character of animals and plant resources (for instance, dog salmon are striped because as people they wore striped blankets and lived in houses painted with stripes. Today*

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<sup>75</sup> On the Internet a site <http://web20.mindlink.net/stolo/oralnarr.htm> called the Stó:lō Curriculum Consortium contains several sections. The Sxw̓xw̓yám are described in the section called “Spoken Literature Stó:lō Oral Narratives” written by M. Teresa Carlson, Keith Thor Carlson, Brian Thom & “Sonny” McHalsie, May 1996.

*the cedar tree provides people with many things because originally he was a man who was kind and generous to all.*

*the inherent characteristics of certain resource procurement areas (the salmon baby story illustrates where good salmon can be caught, and why salmon in other locations taste bad or are poorly).<sup>76</sup>*

And so, we learn that our Stó:lō stories tell us “how to live.” Our *Sx̱w̱x̱w̱yám* teach us that not changing unacceptable behaviour will keep our world in chaos. *Sx̱w̱x̱w̱yám* defined who we were, where we came from, how to act, and defined our relationship with each other and with the world around us. *Sx̱w̱x̱w̱yám* taught respect for “power.”

Our “way of life” and our *Sx̱w̱x̱w̱yám* served us well, until the arrival in our midst of the powerful diseases which came with the European explorers, traders and colonizers. Our peoples’ lives were thrown into turmoil with these diseases, and our prayers and our medicines would not work. Our leaders, our medicine people were helpless against the ravages of the disease epidemics, diseases unknown in our repertoire of knowledge. Thousands of Stó:lō people died, thousands of people who were the keepers of our culture who never had the chance to pass on the original traditions and ways. What of our language must have gone with them? Nonetheless, with the arrival of the Europeans, a new kind of co-existence with other human beings would force the reshaping of Stó:lō identity, a reshaping of identity strongly determined by the Stó:lō in the face of adversity and planned annihilation of that identity. Our stories, as previously mentioned, told us that we survived this kind of tragedy before.

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid

We were thrown against a whole new element, that of the Europeans themselves, with their trade, their whisky and guns, their search for gold, their religions, their education and finally their land grab.<sup>77</sup> We called them *Xwelitem*,<sup>78</sup> “the hungry ones.” They called us savage, Siwash,<sup>79</sup> Indians, undeserving of land we did not “develop.” Their population grew and grew while ours dwindled. They wanted us out of the way so they could take the land and call it their own. And while they attempted to annihilate who we were as Indians, the term by which they named us and invented us, they thought they could destroy the *Xwelimexw* they did not know. Their aim was to ensure that we would not survive as a distinct people among them. And try as they might, and with all their might, to achieve their aim, the *Xwelimexw* would not disappear.

With all their might, and with all their power and influence, the Europeans created in our communities a state of extreme chaos – shades of the chaotic time of *Xá'ls*. Disease, guns, whisky, foreign religions, a foreign education and a foreign government bent on stamping out all that was *Xwelimexw* prevailed among us. Our very own ways of life were outlawed by the foreign government, and our children were stolen and taken away from the influences of our communities where our ways of life were still practiced. Our children were taken to residential schools to instill in them the ways of the *Xwelitem*, to make them forget and to disdain the

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<sup>77</sup> Carlson. Chapters 3 and 4 cover the *Fur and Salmon Trade Era* as well as the *Exploration and Settlement of S'ólh Téméxw (Our Land)*.

<sup>78</sup> Carlson. The term *Xwelitem* dates back to 1858 according to Elder Dan Milo when the gold miners arrived and were poorly provisioned, thus called “hungry people” or “starving people.” Today, the Stó:lō use the term to refer to the *Xwelitem* insatiable appetite for land and resources, p. 54. It is from the Chinook Jargon vocabulary. *Xwí* is “starve” and that may reinforce the “hungry ones.”

*Xwélmexw* Our ways went underground, practiced away from prying *Xwéltém* eyes. And despite the residential schools, which were the single most powerful means of destroying our language through harsh coercive methods, many of our elders kept the knowledge of our language locked inside their minds. Our resistance was strong, but subdued when among the *Xwéltém*.

### ***Putting Things Right in Our World: Reversing the White Paper Policy***

The year 1969 marked a turning point in the history of overt assimilation practices when Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau boldly presented Canada with the infamous White Paper Policy<sup>80</sup> which proposed to eliminate special status for Indians once and for all. Indian leaders from across Canada joined in a united front in opposition against the policy, and had it reversed. While language and cultural practices had gone underground, Aboriginal people were now determined more than ever to openly express their unique cultural identities, or, they feared, they might soon cease to exist as a distinct people with distinct Aboriginal Rights.

But how can we understand the story about the relations between the *Xwélmexw* and *Xwéltém*? I turn to another story about “how to live,” another story about how “to put things right” in this world. It is called, “Social Theory for a Science of Humanity,”<sup>81</sup> which illustrates how

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<sup>79</sup> Crosby. The Coast Indians were spoken of generally as Siwashes, taken from the Chinook Jargon word for “Indian.” Some thought it to be a corruption of the French word “Sauvages,” a term used by the Nor’westers. It was also believed to be a corruption of the term “Salish” which was actually a misnomer, p. 9-10.

<sup>80</sup> Carlson, pp. 103-104.

<sup>81</sup> Charles V. Willie. (1983). **Race, Ethnicity and Socioeconomic Status: A Theoretical Analysis of Their Interrelationship.** Bayside, New York 11360: General Hall, Inc. “Social Theory for a Science of Humanity” is the last chapter of his book. While the story of *Xáts* is set in Stó:lō mythic times with the probability of thousands of years in the making, “Social Theory for a Science of Humanity” was written in more recent times by an African-American man whose people have existed only a few centuries on the North American continent. Willie (1983) draws his theory from his own

dominants and subdominants in society who by working through conflictual situations can arrive at cooperative solutions.

Canada's assimilationist actions were self-serving, serving Canadian society at the expense of the *Xwélmxcw* who were harmed and devastated in the process. The policy was flawed in that it was imposed on the very people who were excluded from involvement in designing it. When the White Paper was presented to the citizens of Canada, *Xwélmxcw* exercised their power of veto as subdominants against the dominants' proposal to finalize the assimilation process. The united front that Aboriginal peoples formed against the Policy forced the interaction between the dominants and subdominants, which resulted in a reversal of the policy. Had *Xwélmxcw* cooperated with the oppressive Policy decision to extinguish Aboriginal Rights, we would have been cooperating in our own oppression, which was what the government expected. But we did not. We were in conflict with it, and opposed it. Canada, on the other hand, could have chosen to impose the policy anyway, but did not. Instead, Canada cooperated by taking some small steps toward dismantling over a century of assimilation initiatives. This example illustrates the dynamics of how social structure and social

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analysis of how Blacks in America have transcended in many ways the unequal power relations between them and White America during the civil rights movement. Willie's Theory includes three major components. They are: a) the interdependent relationship between the individual and society, b) a social structure of interaction between dominant and subdominant groups, and c) the inevitable social processes of cooperation and conflict co-existing simultaneously. Together, these components form the social context from which we may find opportunities for correcting harmful acts in society. First, while society tends to promote stability by establishing norms, the individual tends to fall away from the norm, and has a tendency to promote change in society. Second, effective social organizations include interaction between dominant and subdominant groups in their social structure. Dominants hold social power and control the resources in society, and their role is to establish universal principles of *equality of access* to resources. Subdominants have the power of veto, that is, they have the choice not to cooperate in acts or structures that are oppressive to them. Third, cooperation is inevitable because all individuals are interdependent; none is self-sufficient. One person must do for another what the other cannot do for oneself. Conflict is inevitable because society consists of groups or categories of people with different power interests who aim to fulfill different purposes. One could analyze at length the *Xwélmxcw* relations in terms of Willie's "Theory for a Science of Humanity."

process operating effectively can help solve issues that are harmful toward particular groups in society. The reversal of the White Paper Policy opened the door to Aboriginal people to revitalize their languages and cultures, which were in many cases, by this time, close to extinction. Great challenges toward this effort lay ahead, even thirty years later.

### ***Becoming Smelá:lh: Rising to the Challenge***

Our language diminished swiftly in the last half century to near extinction. The challenge of our Stó:lō communities will be to make our Halq'eméylem language come alive again, *m̓ á:lexw̓* to be spoken from the lips of our people and transmitted once again in a natural fashion to our children. The work toward this aim has begun already through the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre and through the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Language Program.<sup>82</sup> Coqualeetza, with the Halq'eméylem speaking elders, and a dedicated linguist, produced materials that have been used to teach the language in schools, and in more informal settings for adults. The Stó:lō Shxweli Program, which means *spirit* or *life force of the Stóló*, aims to teach adults who are dedicated to learning the language and to becoming teachers of the language. Results to date for both initiatives fall far short of fluency. The question becomes, can these efforts achieve the goal of language revitalization? Can the current levels of motivation and inspiration be sustained? Or can we expect slowing of momentum to the point of discouragement and abandonment of the effort?

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<sup>82</sup> Maureen Bracewell. (August 1997). "*Halq'eméylem Language Programs in Stóló Territory: An Historical Review and Current Summary.*" Report prepared for Stóló Nation. Bracewell elaborates in detail on the historical development of both Coqualeetza and Stóló Shxweli.

Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) in *Endangered Languages*<sup>83</sup> talk about how difficult work in revitalizing an endangered language can be:

*Working with Native American languages can be sad and depressing, stressful, and full of grief. One is always dealing with death and dying, not only of the individual elders, but cumulatively of the language itself (p. 94).*

They further say that “if it doesn’t feel spiritually good to study [the endangered language], there is little hope that the language will survive in any form at all.” And herein lies a key to determining the success of our revitalization effort. We need to know how we really feel about learning the language.<sup>84</sup> What fears, anxieties and insecurities about our language do we need to transcend, and what do we need to do to transcend these feelings and emotions? We need to know what kind of commitment, sacrifice, and effort we are personally willing to make to learn our language, and further, to use it in our daily lives and to transmit it to the next generations. All the technology, all the programs and all the money in the world, although helpful in an ideal situation, will be useless unless our whole community of Stó:lō people is inspired spiritually to do whatever it takes to put our language on our lips, and in a way, “to put things right” in *S’ólh Ténéxw*. We can choose: *st’áxcem* or *smelá:lh*.

Today, we can openly be proud of who we are as Stó:lō people. We can openly practice our cultural ways to fit into today’s society. We are healing our people by strengthening their identity, instilling in them pride in who we are as a distinct Stó:lō people, no longer strangers in

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<sup>83</sup> Nora Marks Dauenhauer and Richard Dauenhauer. (1998). *Technical, emotional, and ideological issues in reversing language shift: examples from Southeast Alaska*. *Endangered Languages*. Eds. Lenore A. Grenoble. New York: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 62-63. Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer state that with adults learning their language as a second language “prior ideological clarification” is necessary to deal with unstated felt emotions and anxieties about learning the language.



our own land. We are learning our language, in which is embedded all of who we are as Stó:lō people.<sup>85</sup> And the past is repeating itself, as we take our place as descendants of the second wave of “first people,” descendants of the ones who survived the ravages of the epidemics and who resisted the powerful forces of the government’s assimilation policy, and who persisted in the knowledge and practice of our cultural ways. We are determined to continue to persist and flourish as a distinct people, learning and practicing our valued traditions, our stories, our connection to the land, to *S’ólh Téréxw*

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<sup>85</sup> Siyámtelet (1988). The philosophy of Coqualeetza states that “Language encompasses all of life or the wholeness of life – self, environment, history, heritage and world view,” p.2.

### Chapter 3

## S'ÓLH TÉMÉXW AND OUR WORLDVIEW

In the last chapter, Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) were quoted as saying that “if it doesn’t feel spiritually good to study [the endangered language], there is little hope that the language will survive in any form at all.” To illuminate what it means to “feel spiritually good,” this chapter examines the Stó:lō’s relationship with the land, a spiritual relationship bound by *sməst̓həxcw*, the power of vitality, thought and will shared in all of nature. The Indigenous “harmony with” philosophy is compared and contrasted with a Western “power over” paradigm, to illustrate how the ways we view our world set us worlds apart in how we relate to each other and our environment. Three stories of Cheam, or *Xwəhijám*, a place where there are “always wild strawberries,” convey the Stó:lō’s intimate identification with the plants, animals and natural resources in S’ólh Téméxw through our *sxwəxwiyám*. I begin to develop an understanding of a Stó:lō worldview of how we, our word and our world blend intimately and spiritually. Despite the strong Xweltem influence on our lives, the Halq’eméylem word warriors’ efforts are beginning to breathe the *Shxwəlí*, the spirit, of our ancestors throughout S’ólh Téméxw.

### ***Our Land, Our Country, Our World***

"Our language connects us to our land," my classmate says to me. "If you want to examine the meaning of something, you should look at the term "S’ólh Téméxw." As she writes the Halq’eméylem words on a piece of paper, she proceeds to explain that the term "S’ólh" means

"Our," "Respectful," or "Sacred," and that "Téméxw" means "Country," "Land," or "World." "Us, the People, are included in our term for the Land," she says, "and this links us to all of our ancestors. See the 'mécw in Téméxw? That part of the word refers to us, the People, like in Xwélmexw, the word for First Nations, the word we use for ourselves."<sup>86</sup>

"I certainly will make a point to explore this term," I assured her. My classmate understood that I was pursuing my doctoral degree, that I was interested in what it means for us as a people to renew and to revitalize our near extinct Halq'eméylem language. I can only hope to do justice in a small way to my classmate's request. With my little understanding of the task at hand, and by observing, listening, reading and reflecting about this topic, I began putting fragmented pieces of this puzzle together. Little did I know when I began how deep the term "S'ólh Téméxw" is embedded in who we are as Stó:lō people. This brief conversation with my Stó:lō classmate began my odyssey toward exploring the idea of meaning, of how we make meaning of Our World, of "S'ólh Téméxw." It was a great beginning in my exploration of how our land, our language, our culture and we, the People, are interconnected and interrelated. I am discovering that "S'ólh Téméxw" is not just words, not simply a representation of the physicality of the World, but a representation of a holistic concept that binds the people spiritually to the physical world, to each other and to all our ancestors, and is expressed best through our Halq'eméylem language. These interrelationships define our culture, define who we are as Stó:lō people, and in other words, define our worldview.

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<sup>86</sup> On March 6, 1998, my classmate, Tl'ówkomot, in Halq'eméylem linguistics, approached me with her idea about S'ólh Téméxw. I decided to make a point to explore this topic in planning my doctoral program.

“S’ólh Téméxw” refers to our *relationship* with the land, a relationship that has been evolving for at least 10,000 years. The relationships in “Our World,” which I will use to refer to the world in Stó:lō terms or Indigenous terms, are defined in the language itself, in the words of the *Sxw̓xw̓iyám* and *Sq̓w̓elq̓w̓el*, our ancient stories of creation and our oral history, or true stories, respectively. Our stories show how we, the land and the language are bound together by *smst̓óyexw*, a powerful spirit that permeates all of nature.

During one of my visits to the Stó:lō Nation offices, I saw the description, or explanation of the Stó:lō Nation logo posted on a door leading to the reception area. I requested a copy of it from the secretary and she kindly photocopied it for me. The explanation given on the Stó:lō Nation Logo represents the essence of Our World, of S’ólh Téméxw, as follows:

### STÓLŌ NATION LOGO

*S’ólh Téméxw te ikwéló  
Xólmet te mekw’stám*

*This is Our land. We have to look  
After everything that belongs to us.*

We, the Stó:lō, have been here

Since time immemorial.

We are grateful for the rivers  
And the mountains  
Which tell our history,

The river which provides our food;

The cedar tree, which provides our houses,  
Canoes, clothing, and baskets;

The sun,<sup>87</sup> which gives us light and warmth.  
Our Oral History,  
Culture, and  
Traditions teach us  
To respect  
And care for these  
Natural resources.<sup>88</sup>

Yes, it's all there, our connection to the Land and its resources, a connection which has been in existence since "time immemorial,"<sup>89</sup> and the connection of our Oral history, Culture and Traditions bound by caring and respect for the land that sustains us. Why then, do we feel the need to assert this, Our World? In what world do we make this assertion?

### ***Two Different Worlds: The Western Influence***

Less than two hundred years ago, Our World, S'ólh Téméxw, was shattered with the arrival of a people whose relationship with the Earth, with the Land, and with the World was very different from Our World as we knew and understood it. With the settling of these visitors to Our Land, to Our World, we have come to understand that we now live in "two different Worlds," a common feeling among Stó:lō people and among Indigenous peoples throughout North America. Today, we are gathering the pieces of S'ólh Téméxw and are putting them back together, clarifying for our future generations what it means to be Stó:lō. The fragments

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<sup>87</sup> Oliver N. Wells. (1987). *The Chilliwacks and their Neighbors*. Vancouver: Talonbooks., "Indian families, living in homes near where the cemetery is now, were known as 'early risers.' They were supposed to have risen and eaten before sun up and not to have eaten again until after sunset. This was the custom and training common in the homes of the 'nobles' or upper class of the tribe, p. 47."

<sup>88</sup> This description of the Stó:lō Nation logo is included in a folder of public relations documents with brochures of the Stó:lō Nation government and a map of the Stó:lō Nation territory and member Bands.

<sup>89</sup> Wells (1987) refers to the Native sentiment "*We have always been here,*" in his discussion "Geological Background to Legendary History of the Tribes." Here, Wells links scientific geological explanations of the area with the Chilkwayuhk legendary history which supports the Stó:lō claims. p. 15

of our shattered S'ólh Téméxw are encoded coherently in our Halq'eméylem language as the literal meaning given of S'ólh Téméxw by my classmate has shown.

Let's go back in time and imagine a visit to S'ólh Téméxw before contact<sup>90</sup> ... Imagine,... uninterrupted expanses of Douglas fir, cedar, and hemlock trees covering the uplands, while poplar trees and berry bushes grow in low lying areas closer to the River. The River is free of pollution, and its many streams and tributaries wind their way through the landscape. ... tens of millions of salmon spawn up the river every year. Elk and deer are plentiful throughout the forests. Sturgeon, salmon and waterfowl teeming in the shallow waters of Sumas Lake. - *River* people burning patches of land ensuring rich berry picking and root harvesting soils for the seasons to come. *River* villages dot the landscape, especially where the many smaller waterways meet the River. ... and the streams, creeks, and rivers are the "highways" of the people, with a few trails for overland routes. The River is the communication artery for the entire region, and some 28,000 *Halq'eméylem* speaking people, *River* people, are easily supported by the region's vast resources.<sup>91</sup>

And now 150 years later, and a World away, S'ólh Téméxw has changed..... Now, the River is called Fraser, and the territory, the lower Fraser Valley. You can see it from the window of a car driving along the Trans-Canada Highway. On a warm sunny day, the eastern valley skyline

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<sup>90</sup> Carlson. The descriptions here of S'ólh Téméxw before and after contact were reworded and drawn from Chapter 10: *Charting Land Use in S'ólh Téméxw (Our Land) Population, Transportation, Ecology and Heritage*. River here refers to the Fraser River. Before contact it was just called the Stó:lō. I italicized the reference of *River* to people. p 164.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

is a brown haze of gases, air pollution, which at times completely hides the mountains... Urban underground infrastructures which provide fresh water and sewage disposal have replaced streams and creeks... And the old Sumas Lake bed is now home to livestock and heavily fertilized vegetables. Signs dot the highway roadside advertising new housing developments being built on the forested hillsides. *Xwel'tem* population of two million people are settled throughout the expanse of the now clear-cut forests. Nineteen cities and twelve towns are linked by a complex series of roads that redefine the landscape, and on all sides regional urbanization encroaches further into the forests and farmlands...<sup>92</sup>

Needless to say, Stó:lō adaptation to this new element of settlement was not smooth. Our land, our language, our ways and our very identity as the Stó:lō in S'ólh Téméxw, were shattered by *Xwel'tem* domination and population influx. Yet, ten thousand years of Our World and of what it means to be Stó:lō will not be wiped away by 150 years of European colonization, according to *Tseloyóthelwet*,<sup>93</sup> one of our young Stó:lō elders, who says "We are fighting for our language now." In my mind I understand this statement to mean more broadly, that we are fighting for S'ólh Téméxw. And as she gets ready for the beginning of our Halq'eméylem class, she says, "Oh, I have to get to work, and make this good." And make it good, she does, by attending to the elders in the class, facilitating their involvement, sometimes mediating understanding between the linguist and the elders. "We work as a team," she says. "We discuss things, together." She is a young elder who has deep reverence for the more

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<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> On March 6, 1998, I spoke briefly about the question Tlówkomot posed with *Tseloyóthelwet*, who looks after the Stó:lō elders and who is, and has been for many years, a Halq'eméylem teacher herself.

seasoned fluent Stó:lō elders and for the treasured knowledge of S'ólh Téméxw that they carry in their hearts and minds. We are a bare thread, a mere breath, away from Halq'eméylem extinction, with only a handful of elders to draw from to make our language come alive and functional once again. Now, we are learning Halq'eméylem in an artificial environment, in a classroom with a Xwel'tem linguist expert. How did this happen to us?

What happened to our language, Halq'eméylem, and to S'ólh Téméxw? I pondered. This new element in our midst, the influence of the West, has created many challenges to S'ólh Téméxw, in terms of what this new element means for us in Our World. I looked to some of the fundamental beliefs of Our World and Their World, the "Two different Worlds" in which we now find ourselves, for clues.

### ***"Dominion Over" and "Harmony With": Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being***

"So God created man in his own image," says the book of Genesis, "in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." And then continuing, it says,

*And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and Multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis, Ch. 1, vs. 27,28)<sup>94</sup>*

This, I learned in my own Catholic upbringing, where I drew, at least in part, my own moral and ethical guidance. As an adult, I came to be exposed to other ideas about what influences us as humans to act, to be and to know as we do. Chief Seattle's speech of 1854<sup>95</sup> impressed me

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<sup>94</sup> The Holy Bible Authorized King James Version. 1611. Toronto: Canadian Bible Society.

<sup>95</sup> Chief Seattle. (1989). "Chief Seattle's Speech 1854. Native Forestry: Ethic to Reality. Proceedings of a Conference. 22-24 November. Ottawa: Infolink Consultants Inc.



deeply, and helped me to understand what I have come to know as a *harmonywith*<sup>96</sup> philosophy. In its poetic, aesthetic, affective beauty, Seattle's speech resounds in my mind, throughout the continent and no doubt throughout the world, the Indigenous ancestral teachings derived from thousands of years of living on this land.

This we know, the earth does not belong to us,  
we belong to the earth.

We are part of the earth and it is part of us.  
The perfumed flowers are our sisters.  
The Deer, the horse, the great eagle;  
These are our brothers.

This land is sacred to us,  
The shining water that moves the streams and  
rivers is not just water,  
but the blood of our ancestors.

The waters' murmur is the voice of  
my father's father.  
The air is precious, for all things share  
the same breath.  
The beast, the tree, the human;  
they all share the same breath.<sup>97</sup>

The two phrases, "*Dominion over*" and "*Harmony with*," were particularly revealing to me, in that whole systems of ideas, could be traced to these two simply stated phrases. What becomes

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<sup>96</sup> Julian Burger (1990) in *The Gaia Atlas of First Peoples* New York: Double Day, summarizes the Indigenous "harmony with" perspective, i.e. "Traditional people, still in harmony with the world around them, do not isolate themselves from other living things, nor consider one creature superior to another." p. 23.

<sup>97</sup> Rudolf Kaiser. (1987). "Chief Seattle's Speech(es): American Origins and European Reception." In *Recovering the Word, Essays on Native American Literature*. ed. By Brian Swann and Arnold Krupat, Berkeley: University of California Press. Kaiser's research shows that Seattle's original speech was probably delivered in his Duwamish language, Lushootseed, translated into Chinook Jargon and then translated into English by a Dr. H. A. Smith. The popularized speech with its ecological connotations was actually a fictionalized version written by Ted Perry for a film with an ecological bent. Perry states that he made the mistake of using Chief Seattle's name in the body of the text instead of using a fictionalized name. And thus, what are actually Perry's words are attributed to Chief Seattle.

evident is the difference between how the two systems view human interrelationships with the natural environment. The Genesis message infers that humans are *superior* beings in this world, are made in the *likeness of God*, and being the rulers of this earth, must "subdue" or exert control over animals, land and nature. Indigenous peoples view themselves as *equal* and *interdependent* participants in the relationship between humans and everything in nature. Respect for all living things, and even non-living things, was important, for if one part of the whole is harmed, the whole is harmed. Rather than "subdue" or "control" nature, the philosophy taught that, by being a part of nature, it is important to live in *harmony with* it.

More recently, I have come to discover more intimately the teachings of my own people, the Stó:lō people, which echo those of our neighbor to the south, Chief Seattle. Sonny McHalsie, researcher and cultural advisor for the Stó:lō Nation, representative of his family of *Shxwéw'hamel* Band, a Stó:lō Nation community, shares his view of our Stó:lō relationship with the land, with S'ólh Téméxw, as follows,<sup>98</sup>

*Archaeologists tell us that we have been here for at least 9,000 years. Our elders tell us we have been here since time immemorial. They also tell us through sxwéw'wiyám (stories and legends) that many of our resources were at one time our ancestors... For instance, people at a village near Hope claim the sturgeon as their ancestor; others from a village near Chilliwack and Agassiz claim the mountain goat as their ancestor. One Legend common to all Stó:lō tells the story of the origin of the cedar tree. It goes like this: At one time there was a very good man who was always helping others. He was always sharing whatever he had. When Xexá:ls (the transformers) saw this they transformed him into a cedar tree so he would always*

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<sup>98</sup> Carlson. In Chapter 4, *A Legacy of Broken Promises*, Sonny McHalsie talks about Aboriginal rights and title. The description of Sonny was drawn from the *Notes on Contributors*, p iii.

*continue helping the people. And so to this day he continues to give and share many things with the people - cedar roots for baskets, bark for clothing, and wood for shelter.*

*So our resources are more than just resources, they are our extended family. They are our ancestors, our Shxweli (spirit or life force). Our Shxweli includes our parents, grandparents, great grandparents, cedar tree, salmon, sturgeon and transformer rocks... Our Elders tell us that everything has a spirit. So when we use a resource, like a sturgeon or cedar tree, we have to thank our ancestors who were transformed into these things. We don't like to think that our ancestors came over the Bering Land Bridge<sup>99</sup>. We have always been here.*

The West, who recreated us within the confines of their own systems of understanding the world, cited evidence that we came to our homeland over the Bering Strait. Not only has the theory been challenged, but there is no legendary evidence of such an event in any of our Stó:lō stories. Our elders tell us a different story about our origins, a never ending story that locks our presence to the time of creation, and interlocks us with the land and with our ancestors. Our differences stretch far and beyond our ideas about Stó:lō origins, which Xwelitem and Xwelmexw ideas about each other from first contact illustrate.

"They should be good servants and very intelligent," said Columbus, in his first log entry upon meeting the Arawaks on October 12, 1492, "for I have observed that they soon repeat

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<sup>99</sup> New evidence cited in the **Vancouver Sun**, April 12 1999 challenges the Bering Strait theory. In the article "Oldest Bones Give Human Migration New Focus," by Gary Polakovic, the author discusses evidence that suggests that the first peoples could have been Polynesians or southern Asians (front page). Challenges to the Bering Strait theory argue that travel on that route "would have been slow and perilous and does not account for widespread distribution of humans at such an early date (page A5). There are no stories in Stó:lō oral tradition which refer to us coming over the Bering Strait.

anything that is said to them, and I believe that they would easily be made Christians, for they appeared to me to have no religion.”<sup>100</sup>

The Amerindians they encountered responded in kind, "The Spanish King must be poor to be asking for other peoples' lands," they would say, and they laughed that the Pope would be so liberal with what was not his. When Cartier, in 1534, set up a cross in Gaspé Harbour, he made motions as if all the land in the region belonged to him, and Chief Donnacona objected. When the French captain made signs with an axe that they wanted to barter for furs and would return with iron wares and other goods, the Amerindians indicated that they would not pull down the cross and had several laughs over the incident.<sup>101</sup> Their gesture of good-will would be in vain.

When the European visitors came to S'ólh Téméxw, the Stó:lō called them "hungry people" or "starving people," or "Xwelítem"<sup>102</sup> in Hálq'eméylem. Stó:lō Elder, Dan Milo, believed that the term dates back to the 1858 gold rush when thousands of poorly provisioned gold miners arrived in Stó:lō territory. Today the term refers to the Xwelítem's continuing insatiable appetite for the land and its resources.<sup>103</sup>

After initial contact back in 1492, the Europeans, in a holy war, or holocaust,<sup>104</sup> proceeded to "subdue" Indigenous peoples, to manifest "dominion over" them and their lands. They came

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<sup>100</sup> Jim Nollman. (1990). *Spiritual Ecology: A Guide to Reconnection with Nature*. New York: Bantam Books, p. 37

<sup>101</sup> L.C. Green & Olive P. Dickason. (1989). *Law of Nations and the New World*. Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, p. 232 "

<sup>102</sup> Galloway (1999). In the Findex for Upriver Halkomelem Dictionary, "starving" is listed as *xwexwí*

<sup>103</sup> Carlson, p. 54

<sup>104</sup> Nollman, p 37. refers to "the destruction of aboriginal Indian culture by Europeans as a holy war" which "translated as a holocaust for a new continent."

to Our World to stake claims of "discovery" for their respective countries. And in the process, they contravened even their own rules and laws which stipulated that only lands which were *not occupied* could be claimed. When they encountered Amerindian people, they found a way to surmount this problematic detail by *redefining occupation*. The new definition of occupation determined that since the hunter/gatherer Amerindians were migratory, they were not truly occupying the land.

At the same time, the ideas of one of Europe's greatest thinkers added to the fervor of expansion and "discovery" for the exploitation of land, native labor and the slave trade. Aristotle's doctrine of *natural servitude*, based on a hierarchical system of superior and inferior, promoted "the right of the superior to rule the inferior and be served by them."<sup>105</sup>

Europeans viewed us as inferior heathen savages, considered to be in cultural infancy and unqualified to govern ourselves. They would then learn and use our Amerindian languages and habits to divide and conquer us, and then to redefine us into their own Western image. They attempted to "Christianize" and "civilize" us to become good citizens of the Western European World they brought when they settled in Our World, in S'ólh Téméxw. In the process, their diseases nearly wiped us out; their laws kept us in check; their alcohol numbed our pain and brought us to our lowest point, and finally, their promises would not be honored.

"God loves everyone," my Catholic religion taught me. Jesus taught the golden rule, "Do unto others as you would have others do unto you." And among other of the Ten Commandments,

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<sup>105</sup> Green and Dickason, p 244-45.

the religion taught, "Thou shalt not lie, steal or kill." As an Amerindian, a Stó:lō, how do I reconcile this history of Xwelítem invasion with my own religious upbringing? I mean no disrespect to the Catholic religion or to Aboriginal people who embrace Christianity in any way. The idea of a Creator, of spirituality and prayer, were no strangers to Amerindian people prior to contact, and probably why it was so easy for them to embrace an all-loving Christian God. In my searching for understanding, I came across Gregory Bateson's<sup>106</sup> work whose analysis of the Christian idea of separation between God and man helped me to place in context the rationalizations so strongly held by the Xwelítem, "the hungry people."

*If you put God outside and set him vis-à-vis his creation and if you have the idea that you are created in his image, you will logically and naturally see yourself as outside and against the things around you. And as you arrogate all mind to yourself, you will see the world around you as mindless and therefore not entitled to moral or ethical consideration. The environment will seem to be yours to exploit. Your survival unit will be you and your folks or conspecifics against the environment of other social units, other races and the brutes and vegetables.*

And so, there it was. If we were seen to roam the land as animals, and were deemed inferior and not able to govern ourselves, and even further, if we were deemed not to have souls, then the land could be seen as "unoccupied," free for the taking.

In contrast, *respect and reverence* for all things in nature is inherent in the Indigenous "harmony with" paradigm, which I will call "scientific." I use "scientific" here in the broadest meaning of the word "science," defined in the Webster's New World Dictionary as "systematized

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<sup>106</sup> Gregory Bateson. (1972). *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*. Toronto: Random House, p 4.

knowledge derived from observation, study and experimentation."<sup>107</sup> We can see from Bateson's explanation how the Western Scientific paradigm would evolve the idea of separation *between mind and matter*, whereas, we have seen that with Indigenous peoples, spirit, or mind, is attributed to other living things and even to non-living things. Through a further examination of the idea of "science," I was able to glean other comparisons between the Western and Indigenous paradigms.

### "Quarks" and "All my relations!"

The Western Scientific paradigm explains very complex matters in terms of its *smallest component parts*. For example, gas temperature and pressure can be explained in terms of the motions of *the molecules*, and human behavior can be explained in terms of *stimulus and response*.<sup>108</sup> A little over twenty years ago it was believed that protons and neutrons were the most "elementary" particles of matter, the building blocks from which everything is made, until it was discovered in 1969 that the protons and neutrons were made up of even smaller particles called "quarks!"<sup>109</sup> It is somewhat disconcerting to know that as a human being one could be thought of as a body of millions and millions of "quarks." For example, how is a quark in me differentiated from a quark in a rock? However, it is also humbling to know that, as in the Indigenous paradigm, all things are equal and equally important.

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<sup>107</sup> David B Guralnik ed. (c1971). *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language*. Scarborough: The New American Library of Canada.

<sup>108</sup> Willis Sharman, Ph.D. (1988). *Global Mind Change*. New York: Warner Books, p 89.

<sup>109</sup> Stephen W. Hawking. (c1988). *A Brief History of Time*. Toronto: Bantam Books, p. 65.

There is a limit to what can be explained by knowing the smallest component of matter, "the quark," if indeed, it turns out that the quark is the smallest component. The supposed objectivity with which the Western model observes and also treats the physical realm is frightening, for how much value, or moral and ethical consideration, can be placed on a world which is understood in terms of a massive number of minute "quarks?" Further, "quarks" do not tell us a great deal about what we are as whole beings, as living beings or as human beings. It is believed by many physicists that quarks will never be observed<sup>110</sup> which makes the whole notion of quarks as particles somewhat metaphysical.<sup>111</sup>

I have come to understand that it is the *relationships* of component parts which make up the whole that is more important than knowing what all the component parts of the whole are. The component parts may not be much in and of themselves until understood in relation to something else. According to Bateson,<sup>112</sup> a strong critic of the Western Scientific Method, it is the *patterns which connect* that should concern us. He explains how to think about the patterns, the connections that all living things have with one another. For example,

- *the parts of a crab are connected by various bilateral symmetry, and these patterns are similar from crab to crab and from parent to offspring. These patterns within the individual growing crab are called first order connections.*
- *Connection by pattern can be found between crab and lobster, animals which have historical evolutionary connections, but now have differences. This is called second order connections.*

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<sup>110</sup>Bruce Gregory. (c1988, 1990). *Inventing Reality, Physics as Language*. Toronto: John Wiley & Sons Ltd., p. 154.

<sup>111</sup>Hawking, p. 73

<sup>112</sup>Gregory Bateson. (c1979). *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity*: Toronto: Bantam Books.,pp. 10- 11.



- *Similar patterns can be described for humans and horses, both, for example, have patterns within themselves, and each are connected to one another as mammals. The comparison between crabs and lobsters when compared with the comparison between man and horse is called third-order connections.*
- *This pattern of patterns is what is called a metapattern, which defines the vast generalization that it is the patterns which connect. The concept of metapatterns is to be thought of as primarily a dance of interacting parts.*

I am reminded here of a phrase that many Indigenous peoples use when they finish praying or making a speech. They say "All *my relations!*" This statement is an acknowledgment that one is part of a great pattern of relationships which is all of creation, what Bateson called the *larger mind*. The "relationship" between entities is understood to be more than the sum of the separate entities themselves. The quality of "*relationship*" determines the outcome of that relationship, and so the "*harmony with*" relationship that Indigenous peoples strove to establish with one another and with the forces of nature makes sense. The essence of Indigenous spirituality lies in the "*quality of relationship*" established in interacting with all of creation. Indigenous peoples "harmony with" paradigm would view it necessary to develop respectful relationships with one another and with all aspects of the environment; thus, making moral and ethical considerations immanent in the process. An example is illustrated in a prayer shared by elder Nancy Phillips, which illustrates how the Stó:lō showed respect for all living things before killing or harvesting them for food and medicine.<sup>113</sup>

*Le th'exustelenet ō sijám*

Pity us, oh siyam.

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<sup>113</sup> Galloway (1982). Upper Stó:lō Ethnobotany. Coqualeetza Education Training Centre. Sardis, B.C.

<i>Meytók'wəbəc'w</i>	Help us.
<i>Th'exwətók'wəbəc'w; lalh ts'wəlh tsós</i>	Pity us; we're getting unfortunate.
<i>Shx'wənlók'wəbəc'w</i>	You did us a favor.
<i>Yalh yəw'k'wá'as hóy.</i>	Thank you.
<i>Qəx te shx'wókwix'tset.</i>	We'll use it in many ways.

(Brent Galloway, 1982)

Another example regarding the notion of respect from Stó:lō Elder Joe Louis:

*The white people stop to pray, we stop to respect - the same thing you know. We respect the woods, the living trees in the woods. We drink the water, it's alive. We breathe the air, it's alive too - Respect it! And it seems like everything you respect helps you along in life, what your gonna try and accomplish, see. That's the teaching of our old people here.<sup>114</sup>*

These daily rituals were reminders of the interdependent interrelationships of all things within creation and the importance of understanding that as humans we are only one part of the whole environment. This relational way of interacting with our environment is holistic, and makes all our relationships holy or sacred. So, in fact, it is the relationships that Indigenous peoples established with the land, its resources and the whole environment, and in particular, the "harmony with relationships," which defined who we were, how we lived, how we conducted ourselves and how we determined our "ways of knowing," "our science."

### ***Our Stories, Our Selves: It's in the Telling***

"Dominion over" and "harmony with," can be thought of as stories we use to explain our place in the universe, where we come from and where we are going. The Western Scientific paradigm,

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<sup>114</sup> Carlson, in chapter 4. *A Legacy of Broken Promises: A Xwel̓tem Exploration and Settlement of S'ólh Téréx'w (Our Land)*. p. 54

with its roots in the "Dominion over" philosophy leads to breaking down, separating and analyzing the world into its smallest component parts in order to understand it, while the Indigenous scientific paradigm, derived from a "harmony with" philosophy is concerned with understanding the relationships of all the parts to one another and to the whole. In a sense, *in the telling of our stories; we are creating ourselves*. Bateson likes to tell a story about a man who asks his computer whether or not it will ever think like a human being. The computer prints its answer on a piece of paper, which reads:

#### THAT REMINDS ME OF A STORY

Connections in a story, Bateson says, can be thought of as relevance, where any A is relevant to any B if both A and B are parts or components of the same "story." And then, as in the *metapatterns* discussed earlier, we face connectedness at many levels. First the connections A and B of the same story and then, connectedness between people in that all think in terms of stories. In this *metapattern* sense, we as humans are connected to the starfish and the sea-anemones, the coconut palms and the primroses. In fact, what is being alluded here is that "thinking in terms of stories must be shared by *all mind or minds*, whether ours or those of the forests and the sea anemones."<sup>115</sup> "Have I got a story for you!" says the bear, the cedar and the land. And it is from all these connections and interconnections that we draw our own stories, creating who we are.

This unfolding of interconnectedness and sharing of mind, or of being part of a great pattern of relationships which is all of creation, or *higher mind*, strikes close to home. The Katzie, a

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<sup>115</sup> Bateson, 1979, p. 13-14

Downriver Halkomelem-speaking people, believed that animals and plants, and perhaps even rocks, possessed power and "sməstjexw," a word which means vitality and thought combined, for there was no conception of one without the other. The water, wind, the sun, the moon and the stars also possessed power, vitality and thought, and man could share in these powers of nature.

*Every living creature in man's neighborhood emanates power, which travels about and frequently attaches itself to the vitality of a human being. The power of an individual wolf, for example, may enter a man, making him a good hunter; the man gains, and the wolf itself loses nothing. Each creature has its special power that it can bestow, and some tiny outwardly insignificant creature may bestow stronger power than the bear or whale.<sup>116</sup>*

And thus, our relationships are bound together by sməstjexw, bound by the power of our shared vitality and thought, or will. The Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en,<sup>117</sup> Indigenous peoples in northern British Columbia, hold a similar worldview.

*This Western world-view sees the essential and primary interactions as being those between human beings. To the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en, human beings are part of an interacting continuum which includes animals and spirits. Animals and fish are viewed as members of societies which have intelligence and power, and can influence the course of events in terms of their interrelationship with human beings, (Gisday Wa, 23)*

The idea that human beings, animals and spirits are part of an interacting continuum bears witness to an understanding of the evolutionary process which links us all together in *metapattern*. The Indigenous paradigm, or worldview, is encompassed in creation stories, myths

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<sup>116</sup> Diamond Jenness. (1955). *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, p. 36-37.

<sup>117</sup> Gisday Wa and Delgam Uukw. (1989). *The Spirit in the Land*. Gabriola: Reflections. In a Supreme Court statement in British Columbia over their land claim, the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en felt it necessary to supply evidence of the framework, or worldview, within which their claim was being made.

and legends involving a trickster, or transformer. For the Gitksan, it is We-Gyet whose "blunders, tricks and falsehoods changed the face of the earth, and the shapes of many of earth's creatures. He was a creator - by accident! Caught between spirit and flesh - no man, yet all men."<sup>118</sup> For the Stó:lō, it was Xá:ls or Xexá:ls the Transformer(s), who came through the world, transforming monsters and other myth-age beings into rocks and animals, and *setting things right* in S'ólh Téméxw.<sup>119</sup>

For mythic people, all of life's teachings were revealed at the time of creation, and through this "sacred history," or sxwōxwiyám, the events of creation are relived and reenacted over and over through story and ceremony. The time of creation is ever present in the now and in the future. Mythic people are people of *biological orientation* who follow Nature's grand symphony of endlessly repeating cycles of birth, growth, senescence, and death, followed by rebirth. And these rhythmic cycles have the same behavior, form and power as at Creation.<sup>120</sup>

Time in Xwelitem history is linear, placed on a continuum where one is separated from the past in a millisecond, and uncertain of what the future will bring. Thus, there is a need to be ever progressing in the development of new technologies for human survival. Western myth is

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<sup>118</sup> In *We\_Gyet Wanders on: Legends of the Northwest; the Bookbuilders of KSAÑ*, front jacket.

<sup>119</sup> Carlson, p. 185

<sup>120</sup> Calvin Martin, Ed. (1987). *The American Indian and the Problem of History*. Toronto: Oxford University Press. In the Epilogue, "*Time and the American Indian*," Martin differentiates people with worldviews based on trickster type, or creation stories and those with a strong Judeo-Christian imprint. The difference, he notes, is that the former feel themselves connected with the Cosmos and cosmic rhythms, and the latter with history. Calvin named the differentiation as *people of myth* and *people of history*, or *people of biological orientation* and *people of anthropological orientation*. P. 194-199.

narcissistic, with all of its great literature heroic, its philosophy humanistic and its image God-like. People of history are people of *anthropological orientation*.<sup>121</sup>

For 10,000 years our Amerindian paradigm of myth and *harmony with* philosophy served us well, while the Xwelítem ever-progressed with the development of their powerful technologies. And ever since our paths crossed, our "two different Worlds" have tried to make sense of each other from our respective worldviews. But more specifically, we, of S'ólh Téméxw are refining our sense of ourselves within the overwhelming influence of the Xwelítem World surrounding us. After 150 years of being nearly completely devoured by "the hungry people," we maintain our uniqueness as the Stó:lō, the River People through our interconnectedness with the land, our language and our *sxwōxwiyám*.

### ***S'ólh Téméxw, Sxwōxwiyám and Halq'eméylem: Our Land Our Stories, Our Language***

*Our legends and stories entrench us in our country, S'ólh Téméxw. Therefore  
Our Halq'eméylem connects us to the land. (Tlowkōmót - Verley Ned)*

The relationships we developed with the land for 10,000 years resulted in the development of Stó:lō cultural and spiritual traditions associated with numerous cultural heritage sites and resources in S'ólh Téméxw. Stó:lō Nation's Heritage Policy today is based simply on Respect and Protection for the people, the land, the resources and the environment. Stó:lō Nation aims

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid. The discussion here of Indigenous peoples and Western peoples is included to show elements of how we are distinct from one another based on our fundamental belief systems and worldviews. Calvin has described Indigenous peoples' way of understanding the world as not being possible that they would develop an "historical consciousness." I contend that it is not our past as Indigenous people that isn't important, but that what is important in the past has been our relationship to our land and environment and to the time of creation. What has been important to the West is focused more on human experience and events. The semantics of what is an "historical consciousness" can be debated within cultural contexts.

to exercise our Aboriginal Rights and claims on Stó:lō territory and the cultural resources and heritage sites located within it, as follows:

1. *Transformer Sites - "Stone people" sites and places which are generally associated with the Transformers Xexá:ls.*
2. *Pictographs and Petroglyphs - Rock paintings and carvings which were made by Stó:lō people are found in various places in our traditional territory.*
3. *Burial or Mortuary Sites - Places where our ancestors, modern and ancient, are buried*
4. *Archeological Sites - All sites of prehistoric or proto-historic origin with tangible remains/features*
5. *Spirited Places - Places inhabited by spirits.*
6. *Ceremonial Sites - Places and areas which are important to past and present Stó:lō ceremonial life.*
7. *Cultural Resource Sites - Places where materials important for Stó:lō ceremonial and spiritual activities are traditionally collected.*
8. *Stó:lō Names - Stó:lō Names are the property of families.*
9. *Traditional Designs, Images, Songs - Traditional designs, images and songs are the property of families.<sup>122</sup>*

Our names and stories show how we, the Xwélmexw, the people, are intricately interconnected with our land, and with the cultural resources and heritage sites in S'ólh Téméxw. Our Halq'eméylem language is integral to understanding these, our stories, and

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<sup>122</sup> Stó:lō Heritage Policy, February 1995. An elaborate discussion of Stó:lō Heritage sites is included in Gordon Mohs, (1990). *Stó:lō Sacred Ground*. Sardis, B.C. : Stó:lō Tribal Council.

ultimately to understanding who we are as Stó:lō. An examination of just one place, in a trilogy of stories about **Cheam**, draws us deep into the interconnections of S'ólh Téméxw, Halq'eméylem and the Stó:lō people.

*"ALWAYS WILD STRAWBERRIES"*

Cheam is an Indian Reserve in Stó:lō Traditional Territory. Wild strawberries grow plentiful on a mountain that is said to have taken its name, **Cheam Peak**, from the same meaning of the Pilalt village of Cheam. Now, the Tait people, in whose territory the peak stands, consider it to be like one of them; for according to legends, the mountain is heard to moan in sorrow when any member of the tribe dies - even in a distant place. But for the Tait, the mountain is known as Theethul-kay, or *Lhilbeqi*<sup>123</sup> "the mother mountain." The word literally means "joined together," and refers to three "sons," the three peaks attached to her to the east. The mother mountain also had three daughters, the youngest of which she is said to hold in her arms. There are legends also concerning the ancestors of the people of Popkum, who came down from Theethul-kay, or *Lhilbeqi*.<sup>124</sup>

Every time a different person tells the delightful story of Cheam, new information is revealed as will be shown in the following Trilogy. In the first story, the mountains take on human attributes, full of events and emotions. The Wells spelling "Theethul-kay,"<sup>125</sup> becomes *Lhilbeqi*,

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<sup>123</sup> On page 655 of Galloway's (1993) Grammar "*Lhilbeqi*" is defined as 'glacier' ('always + 'covering'). However, in Galloway's (1999) *Finderlist for Upriver Halq'eméylem Dictionary*, to join something together in Halq'eméylem is a closer rendition, with its root word as "*lhéq*." Galloway 2002, p.c.

<sup>124</sup> The description of the section "Always Wild Strawberries" is drawn from Wells (1987), p. 17, where he describes Cheam Peak in the excerpt "*Mountains Which Lived in the Native Legends*."

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.



represented in the writing system that was more recently developed for Halq'eméylem. The square brackets [ ] are used to enclose the English translation, provided by Brent Galloway, of the Halq'eméylem spoken sentences from the original interview recorded by Oliver Wells. Stó:lō Elder Mrs. August Jim is telling the story while the younger Stó:lō Elder Mrs. Cooper provides the translation.

How many stories are actually going on here? Well, for starters, there is an original story on which this telling is based. That's one. There is the story told by Mrs. August Jim in Halq'eméylem. That's two. There is the story told by Brent Galloway who translated Mrs. August Jim's rendering. That's three. And there is the story told by Mrs. Cooper who provides her own version of Mrs. August's rendering. That's four. And fifthly, it is a story intermediated by Oliver Wells which likely influenced how it was told. Nonetheless, much is salvaged.<sup>126</sup>

**Te Sxwōxwiyáms Te Lhílheqi**  
**[LEGEND OF CHEAM PEAK]**

*MRS. JIM:* Lóy esesu xét'e o ye xwémlexw sqelóqtelselh mestíyexw ye Lhílheqi.

(it's only)(that they)(say)(just)(the plural)(Indian)(they were close siblings)(people)(the plural)(Lhílheqi)

*[It's only what the Indians say that the Lhílheqi people were siblings close in age][Note that some speakers, including Mrs. Jim used xwémlexw as the word for Indian, rather than xwémexw]*

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<sup>126</sup> Gregg Sarris. (1993). *Keeping Sing Woman Alive, A Holistic Approach to American Indian Texts*. Berkeley: University of California Press. Sarris illustrates how traditional stories can lose so much of their authenticity in the mediation of collecting, translating, interpreting and re-presenting in English forms for non-traditional uses such as school use. Sarris researched the background of the Ya-ka-ma school version of the story of Slug Woman and found that the original translation omitted repetitions that were deemed annoying to an English audience, and that one of the storytellers may have assimilated aspects of Christianity in the telling to impress the ethnographer. In the presentation of the story in a school today, Sarris found the language to be flat, with subject/verb/object structure predominant absence of a first person narrator, the original tellers and even the ethnographer are not identified as sources for the story. The Ya-ka-ma version ended abruptly, no discussion. And so, the need to be careful about citing sources and explaining the process of the telling cannot be overstated. Wells handles this well in *The Chilliwacks and Their Neighbors*.

qe ōwetsel hákw'eles lís kw'e kw'il.  
(but)(I don't)(remember)(if it is)(some)(how many?)  
*[but I don't remember how many.]*

Esu xà::ms te sóseqwt.  
(So)((s)he criiiied)(the)(youngest sibling)  
*[So the youngest sibling cried and cried.]*

Stl'ís kw'es tl'ós ahíweqel kws ó:mets qesu kw'ók'w'etstes te qó: í kw'i stó:lō.  
((s)he wants)(that)(it be him/her)(right in front upriver side)(that)((s)he's  
sitting)(and so)((s)he's looking at it)(the)(water)(in) (the )(river)  
*[She/He wants to be the one sitting right in front and looking at the water in the river.]*

Esèsu tl'e u'òl ahíweqel te sóseqwt.  
(and so)(that's him/her)(just stayed just)(in front facing upriver)(the)(youngest  
sibling)  
*[And so the youngest sibling stayed right in front, facing upriver.]*

Lóy lhéq'elh sqwō:lqwels ye xwémlexwelh.  
(only/at least)(it used to be)(their talk)(the plural)(Indian of long ago)  
*[At least, that used to be the talk of the Indians of long ago.]*

Esèsu xwe'it emí xexéyt á:lhtel qesu xwe st'á tethá xwe smà:lt.  
(so then)(it happened)(came to/started to)(they already mentioned)(and so/so  
that)(became)(like)(that)(became)(mountain)  
*[Then something happened to start transforming them to become like that, to become a  
mountain]*

**MRS. AMY COOPER:** Lhellhálí?  
(Is it women?)  
*[Women?][Mrs. Cooper asks this since the words for siblings given above do not reveal the  
sex of the siblings, and since her Indian name is the name of the baby daughter of Lhílbeqi,  
namely S'óyeuót]*

**MRS. JIM:** Lhellhálí.  
(It is women.)  
*[Women.]*

**MRS. COOPER:** *There are two sisters, and –*

**MRS. JIM:** Lé t'welh lhxwá:le l sqwáléwél.  
(there)(may have been)(be three people)(it's my)(thoughts/feelings)

*[There may have been three people, I think]*

*MRS. COOPER: There may have been three of them, and they were always arguing about who would be in the front to face the river there, so that they could see the river and watch the river.*

*MRS. JIM: Tl'o sóseqwt qesesu tl'o ahíwstem kw'ókwt'estes ye mekw' leq'áleqel ye'ixel.*  
(it's that one)(youngest sibling)(and so)(it's that one)(she was put in front)(watching them)(the plural people)(every/all)(travelling)(by paddling along)  
*[It was the youngest that was the one who was put in front. She's watching everybody travelling by paddling along.]*

*MRS. COOPER: Well, she says that the youngest one is in the front there, so she could watch them as they're paddling along. E sésu xwé'ít? (And so what happened?)*

*MRS. JIM: Emí à:y te xexéyt te mestíyexwelh qesesu xwe smelmà:lt.*  
(he started to)(keep on)(the one)(transforming)(the)(people in the past)(and so)(they became)(mountains)  
*[The one transforming the people in the past started to keep on, and so they became mountains.]*

*Xwe smà:lt kw'e mékw'elhstàmes.*  
(they became)(mountain/stone)(the remote)(everyone in the past)  
*Everyone in the past became a mountain/became stone.*

*MRS. COOPER: Joe, what does that mean: xexéyt?*

*MRS. JIM: Iyá:qtes.*  
(he's changing them)  
*[He's changing them]*

*MRS. COOPER: Changing the people.*

*MRS. JIM: É:'e*  
(yes)

*JOE LORENZETTO: Changing the people, yeah.*

*OLIVER WELLS: How do you say "changing the people"?*

*MRS. JIM: Xéytem.*  
(they were transformed)

*MRS. COOPER: X'éytem.  
(they were transformed)*

*JOE LORENZETTO: Yeah.*

*MRS. JIM: Esu lé xwe smà:lt yútl'òlèmh.  
(so)(they (past tense))(become)(mountain/stone)(they remote past)  
[So those became a mountain.]*

*MRS. COOPER: And they turned into the mountain.<sup>127</sup>*

Reference, in this story, made to Xá:ls, the transformer, clearly identifies it as a sxwōxwiyám. Equally significant, an important word is revealed, that is important to the whole discussion of this research. It is xexéyt, whose root word is xéyt which means "change something," or "transform something." This word is amazingly close in form to the Halq'eméylem word for "write something," which is xéytl. The connection that can be inferred here is that as we write something, so we transform it into whatever it is that we name it. This theory shows how our use of language connects us to the existence of ideas and things like spirituality, mentality, or smstíxexw and that as our vocabularies change, so do our worlds.<sup>128</sup>

In this next account of the Legend of Mt. Cheam, the story is expanded to include relationships with neighboring mountains, and the introduction of a dog which can be seen in

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<sup>127</sup> This is the original transcription of the Halq'eméylem in this story, supplied by Brent Galloway p.c. 2002 but omitted from the Talonbooks publication of Wells 1987. To Galloway's regret all the Halq'eméylem in the stories and most in the conversations was removed in the publication since Talonbooks did not have the fonts. However, the complete manuscript with all the Halq'eméylem and literal translations supplied have been copied and are on file in the Stó:lō Nation Archives. Galloway and Burton plan to produce a book of these stories in the original Halq'eméylem with literal translations and fluent English translations in the next few years (Galloway p.c. 2002).

<sup>128</sup> Gregory, p. 198

the mountains from a certain vantage point. This mountain family story is related by Stó:lō Elder Mrs. Amy Cooper, and intermediated by Wells.

[LEGEND OF MT. CHEAM]

*MRS. COOPER: Well, Mount Cheam is a lady, and Mount Baker is a man. (This is an old legend). So Mount Baker, he comes over and he looks for a wife, and he finds a nice looking girl. So he takes her over to the State of Washington. They live there and they have three boys, Mount Hood, Mount Rainier - I can't tell you what the other one is. And they have three girls, but the boys are the oldest ones. After the boys grew up and she had three little girls, she says, "I had better go back home," she says, "to my people, to the Fraser River." So she comes back, and she says: "I'll stand guard," she says, "I'll stand and guard the Fraser River, that no harm comes to my people, and no harm comes to the fish that comes up to feed them."*

*WELLS: Well, that's very interesting.*

*MRS. COOPER: That's the legend. And then she takes her three children, and she stands up there. And coming down from up the road, there's three little points, and those three little points are her children. They say she holds the smallest one in her hand. And behind her, towards this way, is the dog head of the dog that followed her, and she told the dog to go back home, and it stood there, and stayed there, So I guess right now there, if the snow isn't all off, you could see that dog head plain. Did you ever see it?*

*WELLS: Yeah. Some people call that the creeping prospector.*

*MRS. COOPER: No, it's really honestly a dog head there.<sup>129</sup>*

It is our *sməst̓ɣex̓w*, our thought and vitality, that generates our imaginative capacity,<sup>130</sup> as Stó:lō people, to attribute our humanity to the mountains and to draw on the *sməst̓ɣex̓w* of the

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<sup>129</sup> Wells (1987), p. 51

mountains for our protection and comfort. Smestíyexw is the life and power of will shared in our environment. In many senses, the Stó:lō live in a world bordered on the spiritual realm, in smestíyexw.

Now, for the next story in this trilogy, we might ask ourselves, "How many people does it take to render a Halq'eméylem story into English?" The following story has three people involved in the telling: Edmund Joe Peters translated his wife, Mrs. Peters' rendering of the story, and Oliver Wells who also recorded the story. This story tells of how a people became descendants of the Mountain goat. One can see that the process becomes very complicated with the details of the story becoming blurred as the three tellers seem not to be quite, at least obviously, in synchrony. The beauty of this story is that the Halq'eméylem rendering is included as provided by Brent Galloway. We can see how different Halq'eméylem appears compared to English. One can only imagine the stories as they might have been told before contact, as they would be told in Halq'eméylem, with the use of body language and performance, and in their natural context.<sup>131</sup> It would be wonderful to hear the story in Halq'eméylem, with all its unique sounds strung together like music and spoken like song. I imagine the original tellings as theatrical events, maybe like an opera, where our language sings the universe.

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<sup>130</sup> George Lakoff. (1987). *Women, Fire and Dangerous Things, What Categories Reveal About the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Lakoff is of the experientialist view that "Thought is *embodied*, that is, the structures used to put together our conceptual systems grow out of bodily experience and make sense in terms of it; moreover, the core of our conceptual systems is directly grounded in perception, body movement, and experience of physical and social behavior." He states that "every time we categorize something in a way that does not mirror nature, we are using general human imaginative capacities," and that "Human reason... grows out of the nature of the organism and all that contributes to its individual and collective experience: its genetic inheritance, the nature of the environment it lives in, the way it functions in that environment, the nature of its social functioning, and the like, p. xv.

## Mountain Goat legend

*PETERS: Qwá:qwełłh.*

*MRS. PETERS: Á'a. Xét'e swá:weles a la akwé:lác la telí tshá te Xwé:biyò'm Smá:lt, Lhálbeqiy*

*PETERS: A young fellow went up to hunt, up in Cheam. And he tracked a...*

*MRS. PETERS: P'q'élqel*

*PETERS: Goat, you know, mountain goat. And he comes to the lake there, little lake, and he seen two young women sitting down there. They got selbó:m [how is it?]*

*MRS PETERS: Qesu le kwá:tem*

*PETERS: And they told him that he shouldn't be ashamed of us, and they took him, you see, took him..*

*MRS. PETERS: Kaw le só:sequt t'l'e le x:wé stó: les.*

*PETERS: The youngest one is the one that got him for his wife. And every time they want meat, when the guy goes out, and every bone, Oliver, every bone they eat, you know they don't burn it, throw it back in the lake, back.*

*MRS. PETERS: Li te qó*

*PETERS: In the water. One time this young guy that was brought there...*

*MRS. PETERS: Kwá:l:ces ti te né:qsels t'é'nches sth'òm*

*PETERS: They hid a piece of the nose, you know, and this fellow went out, he come back, his nose was bleeding, and they asked him who ever hid the bone, you know, they wanted to give it to this guy, and he throwed it back in the water. Well, this guy got all right. That's the story, Oliver.*

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<sup>131</sup> Carlson, in Chapter 11, "Spoken Literature, Stó:lō Oral Narratives." A section called "The Interactive Performance Aspect of Sxwogwiyám," discusses how a speaker retains effective control of the medium in oral telling, and compares the

[My comment: I wonder here if the nose bleeding in the story here is saying something about nose bleeding at high altitudes. Wells intervenes now, to elicit details of the story which might be understood by the tellers, but not obvious to the novice listener, or, now, reader.]

*WELLS: Well, these two young women at the lake, were they like spirits? Were they the spirit of the haunting, the goat, or were they women, like?*

*PETERS: The spirit of the goat.*

*MRS. PETERS: E théc:wemət məstjɛc wɔjál'òlɛm e te p'q'ɛlqel*

*PETERS: When they go home to where they are, they were real people*

*WELLS: Yeah, I see, yeah. But when this man saw them at the lake, they were the spirit of the goat.*

*PETERS: Then they were goats, yeah.*

*WELLS: Yeah, I get it. Now, Cheam, I noticed your wife says Cheam just like it was an Indian word*

*PETERS: Yeah, Chýòm*

*WELLS: Well, did the Indians have ...?'*

*MRS. PETERS: Lhílbeqɔj yálh te skɛwɛxs wál'ò smà:lt.*

*PETERS: Lhílbeqɔj, the mountain's name.*

*WELLS: That's Cheam Peak, eh?*

*PETERS: Yeah.*

*WELLS: What does it mean?*



*PETERS: Well, I don't know the meaning. But, you know many Cheam people are living, still living, that's their ancestor is that goat, you know*

*WELLS: Oh, I see, yeah. Well, now, when you say Cheam, it refers to the people, not the mountain, eh?*

*PETERS: Not the mountain.*

*WELLS: No, but the ancestor was the goat of the mountain? I see, yeah. And how do you say this name, this ancestor?*

*PETERS: Syewà:ls.*

*WELLS: And the Cheam refers to the people at the bottom of the mountain?*

*PETERS: Yeah. When the kids grow up, well they send them- send them that man down with his kids, you see, send them home, and his wife too*

*WELLS: And that was the beginning of the Cheam people?*

*PETERS: Yeah.<sup>132</sup>*

Despite the many interventions and Xwelítem influence, these three stories convey the Stó:lō's intimate connection to the land and animals. They show how the mountain, the mountain goat and the people are interconnected and interdependent through their shared power, and how the Halq'eméylem language tells the story best. For without our language, what would be the meaning of "Cheam," the Anglicized version of *Xwóhýò:m* and *Ohýám*. Without the original Halq'eméylem language, one might never make the connection that it refers to a place where there are "always wild strawberries." And so, then, we cannot truly say we are in S'ólh Téméxw

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<sup>132</sup> Wells (1987), p. 94

without knowing the stories of our relationship with the land, and how they are best expressed in our Halq'eméylem language.<sup>133</sup>

### ***What Halq'eméylem means to the Stó:lō: "I felt I was called home..."***

How can you claim your land back if you can't even speak your own language?" says *Tseloyóhwaet*, "How can you say you're Xwélmexw if you can't speak your own language yourself? We're fighting back today." She showed me with great pride some quotes that were prepared by the Stó:lō Shxwéli program participants, the Halq'eméylem word warriors who will breathe the Shxwéli of our ancestors into S'ólh Téméxw. "Their words are going down in history," says *Tseloyóhwaet*.

In these quotes, prepared for inclusion in *Sqwèlqwels ye Stó:lō*, the Stó:lō Nation newsletter, the Stó:lō Shxwéli people were asked "Why is the language so important, and what does it mean to you?" The bold emphases in the following quotes are mine.

- *Finding the "missing link" that joins ancestors to me and carries on to my children..*  
*Kalala - Carole Peters*
- *It seems like a long time ago, but I felt I was called home to learn my language, which is Halq'eméylem.* *Kloyia - Gloria Joe*
- *Halq'eméylem has been passed down from our ancestors. It is part of our culture and it heals and gives me strength.* *Seliselwaet - Bibiana Modeste*

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<sup>133</sup> Louis Owens. (1992). *Other Destinies, Understanding the American Indian Novel*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press. Owens writes about American Indian novelists who use that medium to come to terms with discovering their identity in contemporary America. He states that the very fact of writing in English "adds complexity to the overarching question of cultural identity by using a discourse "charged with value" and 'alien.' " However, he states, "in Native American fiction, for the first time, the interest is always and intensely in the Indian defined in terms of Indian ideas and needs as those have evolved into the late twentieth century." And, "Indian writers today have come to expect, even demand, that readers learn something about the mythology and literary (oral) history of Native Americans." Thus, "Native American writers are offering a way of looking at the world that is new to Western culture." In Chapter 1, "*Other Destinies, Other Plots, An Introduction to Indian Novels*," p.3-3 1,

- *Halq'enyem is my choice as the cornerstone as we build a foundation towards Stó:lō renewal. Siph - Seepree Corpuz*
- *Learning the language is healing the culture wound that was hidden for so long. Smilka - Doreen McIntyre*
- *Our legends and stories entrenches us in our "country" S'ólh Téméxw, " therefore our Halq'enyem connects us to the land. Tl'owkōmot - Verley Ned*
- *Halq'enyem helps us to find our true identity. And is a healing medicine to our soul. Houlóxiya - Eunice Ned*
- *Why is the language important? Because it's our identity. Yómelot - Rosaleen George*
- *Because it was our past, is the present and will be our future. Elizabeth Herling*
- *Language is the bridge for our culture to pass from one generation to the next. Dowslay-whil-tsa - Helen Joe*
- *Speaking Halq'enyem is how the Creator identifies us as Stó:lō Nation people. Tseloyóhewet - Shirley Norris*
- *Our Halq'enyem language is our culture of Stó:lō Nation. Toyále - Dianne Charlie*
- *The Halq'enyem language has been a spiritual healing and empowering journey towards self-conceptualization from now to eternity. Katelila - Catelina, Rentaria*
- *Learning the language is my way of honouring our ancestors. T'it'elem Spáth - Eddie Gardner*
- *Halq'enyem is for anyone who has a desire to communicate from the heart. Chorale - Joanne Combes<sup>134</sup>*

### Xexéylthettset: Writing Ourselves

Through the stories, the language, the people and the land, we can see how all the pieces fit together connected by smestíyexw into one coherent idea - S'ólh Téméxw, an idea that nearly disappeared under a veil of Xwelítem domination. Under this veil, the Xwelítem – the hungry

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<sup>134</sup> T'it'elem Spath – Eddie Gardner.

people - recreated us in the name of Indian, as they devoured our stories, our language, our cultural resources, and our knowledge. They attempted to submerge our Xwélmexwness into artifact, a thing of the past, sure that we would die out, *xwá:ysetcha*, leaving themselves, the Xwelítem, the hungry people, to devour Our land, to devour S'ólh Téméxw.

But we didn't die out, *éwe xwá:yset..* Our ways went underground, muffled by the Xwelítem laws, muffled by the force of their powerful Western influence, muffled by the imposition of their own language over ours. In their own words, they wrote us, *xéyláxwes*, nearly into oblivion. *Xéyláxwes*, they wrote us, into the past, recreated and reinvented us in their words, into Their World, their Xwelítem world.

And now, from under the veil of Xwelítem influence, we rise, *pé:ékwset*, to name ourselves, to write ourselves, *xéylthetset*, even in *Xwelítemqel*, in the Xwelítem tongue, *xéylthetset*. We have learned how to use the writing instruments, *xátel*, of the Xwelítem, and in their *Xwelítemqel* we write ourselves, *xéylthetset* alive *á:ylexw* into a new way of looking at their world, making their words our own, saying who we are in their foreign tongue.

And even though our Halq'eméylem language, our *Xwélmexwqel*, has been submerged deep under the veil of Xwelítem influence, we and our *Xwélmexwqel*, our language, will rise, *pé:ékwsetcha*. And with this *pé:ékw*, our *Xwélmexwqel*, our Halq'eméylem language, this most important assertion of our uniqueness, will burst through the Xwelítem veil and breathe our identity throughout S'ólh Téméxw. For the spirit of the Stó:lō, the spirit of the River, lives in our language, *á:ylexw te Stó:lō Shxweli*. The next chapter will examine more closely how

Halq'eméylem expresses Riverworldview, and is the best expression of our spirit, our world and of creation.

## Chapter 4

### T'ÍT'ELEMETTSET TE ST'ÍLEMS THE SKW'OKW'QÁ:Q SINGING THE ROBIN'S SONG

Grand Chief Mike Mitchell of the Mohawk Council of Akwesasne, at the 1988 Assembly of First Nations Aboriginal Language Policy Conference, captured beautifully the essence of what it means when we say that our languages are from the Creator in the following statement,

*“What would happen to the Creator’s law if the robin couldn’t sing its song anymore?” he asked. “We would feel very bad; we would not understand that something snapped in nature’s law. What would happen if you saw a robin and you heard a different song, if it was singing the song of the seagull? You would say, ‘Robin, that’s not your language; that’s not your song.’”*

*“That’s what my grandfather used to say to me,” Mitchell said. “It was not meant for us to lose our language; we broke the cycle, and today we have nothing to stand on if our language is going to die (AFN, 1988, cited by Kirkness, 1998:74).”<sup>135</sup>*

This chapter explores in Stó:lō terms the concept that “language is a gift from the creator,” asserting that the place where the River People and River environment intersect is where we derive our understanding of creation, and that our Halq’eméylem language is its best expression. I will illustrate how Riverworldview permeates the Halq’eméylem language, blended in terms for place, time, in general directional terms, and in human body parts. Terms for animals incorporate word pictures related to Stó:lō creation stories. By breathing life into our Halq’eméylem language, we aim to reconnect with our collective memory that is

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<sup>135</sup> Verna J. Kirkness. (1998). *Aboriginal Languages: Collections of Talks and Papers*. Vancouver: Verna J. Kirkness, p. 74.

distinctively Stó:lō, to reconnect with the legacy of our ancestors and their relationship to the River, to *sing our own song*.

In 1975, the 24 Bands of the Stó:lō Nation came together and prepared a Stó:lō Declaration, which includes the following in its statement:

*We, the people of the Stó:lō tribes know the Creator put us here. The Creator gave us laws that govern all our relationships to live in harmony with nature and mankind..*

*... The Creator gave us our spiritual beliefs, our languages, our culture and a place on Mother Earth which provided us with all our needs.*

*We have maintained our freedom, our languages and our traditions from time immemorial..<sup>136</sup>*

Immediately, by this passage, we can see how all aspects of Stó:lō identity, is represented in an interrelated system of beliefs a) in a Creator, b) that the Creator gave us laws, languages, culture and place, and c) that all these gifts, including language, have been a part of the Stó:lō people since time immemorial. Rarely, is the importance of language spoken about without mention of these three interconnecting factors which altogether define us as Stó:lō people.

Aboriginal people across Canada believe in the notion that our languages come from the Creator. This broadly based belief is incorporated in documents that represent First Nations people nationally. In 1992, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) summarized the importance of Aboriginal languages as follows:

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<sup>136</sup> The Stó:lō Declaration is included in Public Relations packages given to visitors to Stó:lō Nation, and is also included in Stó:lō Nation's Employment Policy manual

*The Aboriginal languages were given by the Creator as an integral part of life. Embodied in Aboriginal languages is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and the fundamental notion of what is truth... Language is the principal means by which culture is accumulated, shared and transmitted from generation to generation. The key to identity and retention of culture is one's ancestral language.*<sup>137</sup>

The interconnectedness of Creator, language and identity speaks clearly to a spiritual aspect in an Aboriginal worldview and possibly what Dauenhauer & Dauenhauer (1998) were referring to in their requirement for language survival that the effort must “feel spiritually good.” In plain language, one might say that the Creator gave us our languages to tell us who we are, to distinguish us from one another, celebrating our diversity. Along the same vein, a 1991 Report by the First Nations Congress titled *First Nations Aboriginal Languages Policy and Program Considerations* noted that

*“to speak your Aboriginal language means more than just speaking. Our languages are tied to knowing who you are in the core of your soul (cited in Ignace 1998).”*<sup>138</sup>

How can we know who we are if we cannot learn our history, beliefs and stories from our elders told to us in our Aboriginal languages? So much of what is inherent in our Aboriginal languages is untranslatable. Elder and Language Teacher Instructor, Catherine Bird, Nakazkli Nation, in a statement to the graduates of the Carrier language teachers program, states

*It is important for the people to know their mother tongue. This is how our elders talked to the people and passed down our history, beliefs and stories. When we started to lose our language the older generation could not communicate with the younger generation in our*

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<sup>137</sup> Ignace, p.25.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 24.



*language and the meaning was lost when they tried to communicate in English (Ignace, 1998).<sup>139</sup>*

Our histories, beliefs and stories are embedded in the languages themselves, in the very ways that our languages have evolved to include the meanings inherent in them. How will we pass this legacy of our Creator's gift to our future generations if we do not have a language with which to tell them of our rich heritage?

The chief of an Interior First Nations community looking toward the future affirms how important language is to identity when he remarked that

*"Thirty years from now I do not want my children to know by their status card only that they are Indian. Knowing their language is what will give them their identity (Ignace, 1995, cited in Ignace 1998)."<sup>140</sup>*

And so it is clear in the minds of Aboriginal peoples, including Stó:lō, that language, identity and worldview which includes a creator and creation are inextricably interconnected, and that by learning them we may restore wholeness to our peoples and communities from the trauma inset by their very erosion. From 1975 and certainly before that time until today in the year 2000, the statements from Aboriginal peoples ring a common note continuously and passionately, even more so today than before. The following is from the Vision Statement on Languages from the Language Secretariat of the Assembly of First Nations:

*In spite of a history that could have destroyed our cultural survival as Peoples, we have continued to express our culture through the deepest appreciation, respect, commitment and celebration of our unique relationship with this Earth, One Another and all of Creation. It*

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<sup>139</sup> Ibid., p. 28

<sup>140</sup> Ibid., p. 24

*is our languages that provide us with the finest words and the context for expressing, recognizing, understanding and living in this special relationship with the world. The survival of our languages is essential to our cultural identity, whether we speak with full fluency and eloquence or are among those who are just beginning to learn our first words (AFN, 2000).<sup>141</sup>*

Durante (1997) says that “to have a language,” means being part of a community of people who participate together in a shared range of ways of communicating, of being part of a tradition, of sharing a history, and thus of having access to a collective memory which includes stories, innuendoes, opinions, recipes, and other things that make us human. Without our language, or with only limited knowledge of our language, we cannot access our collective memory.<sup>142</sup> As Aboriginal peoples, who in a drastic way have been stripped of our languages, stripped of our rightful Aboriginal identities inherent in our collective memory, the consequences have been devastating to our very livelihoods. In many ways, we have continued to “have a language” even in the ways we distinguish ourselves through our own unique ways of communicating using English.

By *breathing life* into our Aboriginal languages, we want to and aim to reconnect with our collective memory that is distinctively Stó:lō, to reconnect with who we are as defined by our ancestors through our ancestral language, to redefine our world today in our own terms, and to achieve the wholeness we long for that is inherent in knowing who we are collectively. I quote Durante at length as he elaborates further on what it means “to have a language,”

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<sup>141</sup> Assembly of First Nations Language Secretariat. (July, 2000). *Vision Statement - Languages*. Posted on the AFN website.

<sup>142</sup> Alessandro Durante. (1997). *Linguistic Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p.334.

*To have a language... we could say that language is in us as much as we are in language. By connecting people to their past, present and future, language becomes their past, present, and future. Language is not just a representation of an independently established world. Language is also that world. Not in the simplistic sense that all we have of our past is language but in the sense that our memories are inscribed in linguistic accounts, stories, anecdotes, and names just as much as they are contained in smells, sounds, and ways of holding our body. If language is action, as proposed by Malinowski, and the ways we speak provide us with ways of being in the world, as suggested by Sapir, Worf, and many others, linguistic communication is part of the reality it is supposed to represent, interpret, and evoke. If language is, in Wittgenstein's words, "a form of life," then to have a language not only means to have an instrument to represent events in particular ways, it also means to have the ability to interact with such events, affect them or be affected by them (Durante, 336).<sup>143</sup>*

How much more closely interconnected can we, our identities, and our languages be if languages truly become our "past, present and future." And if language is "a form of life," then it is the embodiment of meaning created by the life form which is ourselves as humans *in concert with* the environment in which we create it. That is, to say, that we cannot name something, for example, without that something telling us what it is, by its touch, feel, smell, sound and look. What other means do we have to know our world, other than *interacting with* it? Language, having been born from this interactive process, takes on a life of its own, affecting us in ways beyond our conscious awareness. Lakoff and Johnson (1999) elaborate more fully the idea of the embodiment of reason,

*First, [findings of cognitive science] tell us that human reason is a form of animal reason, a reason inextricably tied to our bodies and the peculiarities of our brains. Second, these results tell us that our*

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<sup>143</sup> Ibid., p 336.

*bodies, brains, and interactions with our environment provide the mostly unconscious basis for our everyday metaphysics, that is, our sense of what is real*<sup>144</sup>.

A sense of what is real for the Stó:lō is the River and its environment, which in Halq'eméylem is intimately reflected in terms for place, general directional terms, body parts, social system, time and probably in other ways not examined in this study. What a strong sense of identity in being Stó:lō it will be for those who choose to learn the intricate nuances in our Halq'eméylem language that reflect the Stó:lō, reflect us.

### ***River People, River Culture***

Our identity is embedded in the very name we call ourselves, the Stó:lō, or River People. The River is our lifeway, our culture, and is deeply interconnected to our spiritual beliefs of a Creator and creation. Our language connects us to the River and its environment and is reflected in the names we give our places.<sup>145</sup> The place names we use today for our communities submerge the rich Stó:lō meanings which describe vividly aspects of the River or River environment.

<u>Common usage</u>	<u>Halq'eméylem</u>	<u>Meaning</u>
Aitchelitz	<i>Átšelets</i>	“edge at bottom” or place where two rivers meet”
Cheam	<i>Chiyám, Xwəhiyám</i>	“always wild strawberries”
Lakahahmen	<i>Leq'á:mel</i>	“level place” or “place that is visited”
Peters (Squatits)	<i>Skəwátets</i>	“water trickling through”

<sup>144</sup> George Lakoff and Mark Johnson. (1999). *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books. p. 17.

<sup>145</sup> Carlson, pp. 197-199.

Seabird Island	<i>Sq'éwqel</i>	“tum in the river”
Shxw'owhamel	<i>Shxw'owhámél</i>	“where the river levels and widens”
Squeah	<i>St'élxwæth'</i>	“to move in a semi-circle with the current”
	<i>Skwáyò<sup>146</sup></i>	“waterfall”
Tzeachten	<i>Ch'iyáqtel</i>	“fish weir”
Yale	<i>Xwæxwælá:lhp</i>	“willow tree place”

We have retained these names, yet many Stó:lō people today are not aware of the Halq'eméylem meanings we have for these places. I was born in *Skwáyò*, a place I always knew as Squeah. Little did I know until today that the name of the place I was born held a special significance defined by a natural phenomenon. It is also understood that it might be derived from the Lillooet term “*skwáistqw'om*” (Stó:lō orthography), “waterfall.” This revelation gives Squeah special meaning to me, more special than the vague notion I previously held of this place. Recently, I attended a celebration of the education achievements of the children of the Cheam First Nation, and was delighted to hear some of the history related there. The master of ceremonies played a little trivia game with the children where one of the questions asked was “What is the meaning of Cheam, or *Chiyámé*?” Many hands went up from the children

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<sup>146</sup> Galloway (1993) in his *Grammar*, lists Squeah as possibly derived from *skwél*, waterfall, or from the Thompson (Nlakapm̓x) language. But Galloway (2002 p.c.) notes that the Thompson word for waterfall in an exhaustive Thompson dictionary by Thompson and Thompson (1996) is completely different, while the Lillooet word for waterfall (from Jan van Eijk p.c.), is a more plausible source, that would be written in the Stó:lō orthography as *skwáistqw'om* (which is analyzed as s- nominalizer, root *kwis* ‘fall,’ ‘*tw*’ ‘water,’ –am ‘intransitive’), and *kwis* can easily be heard as *kwijs*; if the suffix for water is dropped as we drop water in our clipped version “falls” for waterfalls, we are left with *skwájsom*, not far from *Skwáyò*.” Carlson (1997), on p. 198, lists Squeah as *St'élxwæth'* “to move in a semi-circle with the current.”

who showed anxious determination in their faces to respond, “always wild strawberries.” The pride shone through the children’s faces at their knowledge of this little bit of important trivia.

*Siyémhəs telí te Yeqrəyeyqúiwəs* (Chief Frank Malloway of Yakweakwouse) tells eloquently the meaning of Chilliwack,<sup>147 148</sup> the place, and its meaning to the people of the area. He illustrates how the place is defined by a function of relationship between River People and the River.

*When you go up the river there was a method of poling. You know that was a skill in itself. A person would pole right up the Fraser along the edge of the river. I think that there was a real skill in it because I tried it and I couldn't keep the canoe straight. I would push on one side and the canoe would head out the other way. You had to have a skill to learn how to do that. They used to talk about the meaning of Ts'əlxwéyeyw (Chilliwack). “What does Ts'əlxwéyeyw mean?” But if you heard our Chief Lonie, he would say, “Ts'əlxwéyeyw means as far as you can get up the river using a paddle. Then when you had to switch to a pole, and that's where Ts'əlxwéyeyw was.” So that made sense to me, and that was the name of our tribe - my people.*

Imagine, a name based on the place on a River where one switches from using a paddle to a pole to move in it, and naming a people by this very function of the name of the place. Language, identity and culture are interconnected so obviously here. This account shows clearly why Aboriginal people whose language, identity and culture are interconnected in this obvious way would understand so strongly the deep meaning of these interconnections. Without the language the interconnections are not grasped easily. Cheam, removed from the original name, *Chiyám*, is just a name. And what is “Chilliwack” without knowledge of

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>148</sup> Galloway (2002, p.c.) in his dictionary, lists *St'əlxwáqiw-Ts'əlxwáqiw-Ts'əlxwéyeyw* as Chilliwack River and Chilliwack Indian People, and the literal translation of the word as “slough/backwater/quieter water at the top of the head (or) something to go into slough/quieter water from the river at the top of the head.”

Halq'eméylem? One may have some vague notion that it comes from the people of the area, usually no more. But, for *Siyénobes*, “Chilliwack” holds greater meaning related not only to its Halq'eméylem name, and to Stó:lō identity, but to the lifeway of the River, to River culture. “Chilliwack” defines a relationship based on interaction between River people and the River, and defines the people as the *Ts'elxwéyexw*

The River further defined us in determining how our social structure was developed.<sup>149</sup> *Smelá:lh*, for example, is the Halq'eméylem word for high status people from high status families. To be *Smelá:lh*, meant to be from a family who “knew their history.” Being from a *Smelá:lh* family meant that the family knew which productive fishing or berry picking sites the family had access to, and that the family knew the legends, or *sxwəxwəyám* related to these places and resources. *Smelá:lh* people knew special information about plants and other resources, and had relationships with spirits of prominent family ancestors.

Being *St'áxem* refers to a low status family, or “poor people.” *St'áxem* implies “people who have lost or forgotten their history.” Without knowledge of history, one could not access the hereditary privileges of high status families. To be upper class, or lower class, then, was determined by the access one had to the River and its resources and to the rich spiritual resources associated with it. Today, many of us are “lower class,” or *St'áxem*, because we do not have a deep understanding of our culture and how it is embedded in our Halq'eméylem language. Our language was stripped from our tongues by the colonial imperative. *Skw'iyéth* were slaves and had no direct access to any of the River resources.

Despite the declining use of our language, River culture thrives. River resources continue to be managed through family connections today. Fishing spots and berry and root locations are managed by families who have ancestral obligations to these places, and these rights and privileges are acknowledged through naming ceremonies. During the naming ceremonies, a speaker describes the places and resources to which the previous owner of that name had access. River resources are considered ancestral relations to people living today. The *sxwəxwəyám*, or legends of *Xexáls*, the powerful Transformers who changed the world in ancient times, tell of our ancestors who were transformed into River resources such as the salmon, eulachon, sturgeon, cedar tree and so on.<sup>150</sup>

*Siyénbəs* shares how his family is descendant from the original *Ts'əlxwəyqw*<sup>151</sup> delineating how identity, place and social status are interconnected.

*I don't think there was any movement. You were born into your class you know.. I guess if you go back in history, well it's like Chief Ken Malloway said: "we're the original chiefs of the Ts'əlxwəyqw people. He meant himself, his uncle, my brother and myself. We trace our history right back to Chilliwack lake. We're the oldest families here, but we don't say we're higher up. Our history says we're from the first families. The names that we carry are from the first family, from the four brothers who started the Chilliwack tribe. Kerry Malloway carries that name Wilí:ləq, and I carry the name Siyénbəs, my son carries the name Th'éládnayət and my uncle carried the name Yəxwəyem but now his son Cecil carries that name. So the four names are still in our family and Kerry Malloway always says that if you're looking for chiefs, you look towards our family because we're hereditary chiefs.*

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid., pp. 89-90.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 167.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid., p. 15.



This account is an example of a family who knows their history. The following stories, also from Siyémches, depict knowledge of *sxwéxwíyám*, of the stories of the time of creation related to the River Culture. Smelá:lh people were well versed in this knowledge.

*“Why we got salmon”*

*I questioned Ed Leon about it [First Salmon Ceremony], and he told me about the teachings behind it and the prayers. He used to tell a lot of stories that were passed on to him about when the world was created. You know that it went that far back. And he was talking about why we got salmon.*

*He said, “Us Indian people in the Fraser Valley and the tributaries of the Fraser never ate meat very much. We only ate meat when we ran out of salmon.” He said, “That when the creator first made mother earth, he had all kinds of meat around here, bear, deer, elk. When you eat meat you get that heavy feeling and you don’t want to move too much because meat weighs you down. They used to pray to the creator to send them food that didn’t bog them down..” He said that one of the *shxwalam* [Indian doctors] had a dream that the creator was sending something up the river and told him to go down to the river and scoop their dip nets, and it was the salmon.*

It was not enough to know the origin stories of the salmon. In the continuing relationship between the Stó:lō and the salmon food supply, it was important to always remember to be thankful to the creator by maintaining a deep respect for this gift which sustained our people.

*They told them how to respect the salmon and thank the ones that sent the salmon. The salmon people from out in the ocean, you pray to them and thank them for what they sent. The salmon people sent their children up to you so you’d have something different to eat that gives you better energy... You have to just thank them, take the bones and send them back after you have eaten the first salmon. He said that if you didn’t do that you weren’t showing your respect for the salmon people and they would quit sending their children out to you.*

The deep respect that the Stó:lō had for things in nature can be associated with how they viewed nature. Stó:lō understood that they were only a small part of nature, dependent on nature for all that nature provides, and in many ways, at the mercy of nature herself. The anthropomorphizing of salmon and other things in nature, referring to them as people, as human, places those aspects of nature on a level equal to humans.

A spiritual interrelationship with the “Other-than-human beings” in our environment is echoed by Jocks (1998), a self-professed scholar of religion and a student of the religious life of North American First Peoples specifically. As a Native person himself, he shares his deep concern for the loss of Native languages in this respect.

*There is no way to decide which is more devastating: the loss of practical knowledge in such realms as history, natural science, and social organization; the loss of stories and jokes and all the richness of human experience they carry; the loss of skills of perception trained by Indigenous linguistic structures; or the loss of depth in our relationships with Other-than-human beings (Jocks, 1998: 218).<sup>152</sup>*

This type of relationship with “Other-than-human beings” features strongly in Aboriginal peoples’ worldviews and can be recaptured in a way that makes sense for us today by reconnecting with our language and our s̓wox̓wiyám. Lakoff & Johnson (1999), in their development of the theme that “reason is evolutionary,” postulate that since abstract reason builds on and makes use of perceptual and motor inference which is also present in “lower” animals, rather than separating us from other animals, their line of “reasoning” places us on a

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<sup>152</sup>Christopher Jocks. (1998). *Living in cartoon translations: Longhouse “texts” and the limitations of English*. In *Endangered Languages*. Ed. Lenore A. Grenoble & Lindsay J. Whaley. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. p. 218.

continuum with them<sup>153</sup>. This notion is not new for Aboriginal peoples, and is an integral part of our Stó:lō worldview, a Riverworldview.

The word *sməst̓ɣexw* in Halq'eméylem is particularly revealing. "*Sməst̓ɣexw*" means "soul," "life spirit," or "power of one's will,<sup>154</sup>" or "power of thought combined with vitality.<sup>155</sup>" It was believed that plants, animals and even rocks possessed *sməst̓ɣexw*. In Halq'eméylem, one can create a noun by adding a prefixed "s" to a verb. For example, adding this "s" to the verb "*t̓'ílem*," "to sing" creates the noun "*st̓'ílem*," which means "song." The Halq'eméylem word for person, or "to be a person" is "*məst̓ɣexw*" That which is the spiritual essence of a person is "*sməst̓ɣexw*" Therein lies the spiritual interconnection between Stó:lō people and the River environment - *sməst̓ɣexw*, inherent in the very word spoken.

Salmon 'people' are an integral aspect of River culture. Not surprisingly then, that terms for salmon are well developed in Halq'eméylem, including sixteen different types with eighteen names. Each salmon species (coho, dog, humpback, sockeye, and spring) are divided into small (fry, small in size, or kokanee [landlocked]) and large; the spring and sockeye (and perhaps others) have further terms specifying the time of year they run and the river they spawn in or run up.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Lakoff & Johnson, p 4.

<sup>154</sup> Brent D. Galloway. (1999). Finderlist for Upriver Halkomelem Dictionary. Unpublished document.

<sup>155</sup> Diamond Jenness. (1989). *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*. Victoria: British Columbia.

<sup>156</sup> Galloway. (1993). *A Grammar of Upriver Halkomelem*. Berkeley: University of California Press. P. 513

The ‘small adult coho’ is referred to as ‘little berry;’ its origin story links the coho to a berry that dropped into the lake or water. Thus, the spiritual relationship between the Stó:lō and their environment is inherent in names given to animals, names associated with their origin stories. ‘Speckled trout’ is called ‘little berry of red-flowering current;’ its origin from a red-flowering currant having dropped into the water.<sup>157</sup> This kind of naming links our everyday understanding of the world to the time of creation, and what a delightful way for children to learn about their environment.

River Ways, or River Culture, is inherent in River People’s terms for time, apparent in the names for months, or moons. *Syildem*, the Stó:lō year starts in the month (*skw’ecás*) equivalent of October. Each year begins at about the first quarter of the moon in October, and the moon beginning in October is the first of each year. The *-as*<sup>158</sup> suffix refers to face, and the root *kw’ec* means ‘to count,’ and the *s* prefixed turns it into a noun. Specific years were probably referred to by describing some event. In giving someone’s age, the number precedes either *syildem*, or *máqa*, ‘fallen snows.’<sup>159</sup>

Each month, a lunar month, begins on the first quarter of the moon visible after the new moon. Each name refers to a time for some activity or event as follows:

*tempákw*

**October**, time to smoke dry Chehalis spring salmon

or

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<sup>157</sup> Ibid. p. 512

<sup>158</sup> “-os” is semantically extended to round objects including coins and moon. Galloway (1993), pp. 203, 206, 213, 218, 488, 549.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid. pp 571-573, gives an elaborate description of Time and Tense in Halq’eméylem, including the names and meanings for months.

<i>temchálhtel</i>	... Time to dry salmon
<i>xets'á:uestel</i>	<b>November</b> , time to put away canoe paddles for winter
<i>tabc'wíts</i>	or ... leaves are falling
<i>maqós</i>	<b>December</b> , fallen snow season
<i>pelóqes</i>	<b>January</b> , dried sockeye head, torch season
<i>temil'k'q'es</i>	<b>February</b> , time to get jammed in as in a trap, a box, referring to snow on pithouse
<i>temi'elénises</i>	or ... Time one's hand sticks to things from the cold
<i>welék'es</i>	<b>March</b> , little frog season, when they start talking
<i>qweloythi:lem</i>	or ... Birds making music
<i>temkwákwexel</i>	<b>April</b> , time for baby sockeye salmon
<i>lhem'óles</i>	or ... Time of spring showers in one's eyes
<i>temelále</i>	<b>May</b> , time for salmonberries
<i>temqoq'ó</i>	<b>June</b> , time for high water
<i>temi'áncw</i>	or ... Time for gooseberries
<i>epóléstel</i>	<b>July</b> , tenth month
<i>temq'wá:l</i>	or ... Time for mosquitoes
<i>temchálhtel</i>	or ... Time to wind dry fish at Yale
<i>tembéqi</i>	<b>August</b> , time for sockeye salmon
<i>temkwálexw</i>	<b>September</b> , time for dog salmon

Eight of the terms for months relate to gathering and processing food; four relate to activities of fauna; seven relate to the weather or are caused by it directly; and one is numbered, allowing the calculation of when the year begins. All relate to the River system.

The River system is so central to Stó:lō people that river terms are the main set of general directional terms besides demonstratives and phrases such as *lí te smá:lt*, ‘to the mountain’<sup>160</sup>. There are several types of these terms: directions toward and away from the river; upriver and downriver; both preceding types used at once (i.e., regarding sides of a house); and up and down movement in the river. Numerous such terms are used. Here are a few of the basic ones.

<i>tá:l</i>	toward the river (on land)
<i>dní:dm</i>	away from shore (on the river)
<i>dná:leqw</i>	toward the backwoods, away from the river.
<i>wá:qw</i>	drift downstream, drown
<i>lbós</i>	drift downriver
<i>abí:w</i>	upstream
<i>tít</i>	upriver
<i>lbó:se:el</i>	downriver way, down that way, downriver below
<i>tít:se:el</i>	upriver way, up that way, way upriver
<i>te:lbós</i>	from downriver
<i>te:tít</i>	from upriver

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 568. Describes directional terms based on the river system.

*slhéq'qel* way upriver

House terms are coined with the river as a reference point. For example, *slhéq'qel*, 'way upriver,' appears to be related to the term *lbeq'ewillh*, 'opposite side of the house (on the inside).' *Onchmawxel*, 'front end of house (inside or out)' is literally 'side toward the river.' *Stselq'wáxel*, 'back end of house (inside or out) refers to the 'side away from the river,' and is also related to the word for Chilliwack, *Sts'elxw'éyeyru Stiytáxel*, 'upper end of house (inside or out)' is literally 'upriver side,' and *sewq'wáxel*, 'lower end of the house' literally translates as 'downriver side.'

River Culture is embedded even in Halq'eméylem terms for body parts. For example, *t'áxw* 'going downriver' is embedded in the words *xut'óxwésts*, 'hollow of the hand' and *xut'óxwéxel*, 'arch of the foot,' and literally translates as 'the part that is going downriver on the face of the hand' and 'the part that is going downriver on the face of the foot.'<sup>161</sup> In Halq'eméylem, words for people and human body parts and aspects of the environment are folded into each other as in the above examples of 'hollow of hand,' 'arch of foot,' and 'sides of a house.'

The integration of these aspects of the River in Halq'eméylem words truly illustrates the worldview of interconnectedness between humans and their surrounding environment. The word for land, earth, and world is *ténéxw*, the word for Stó:lō people is *Xwélmexw*, and the word for umbilical cord is *méxwéy*<sup>162</sup>. The 'mexw' in each word may link us *Xwélmexw* to our

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<sup>161</sup> Ibid. p. 468

<sup>162</sup> I have asserted some poetic licence here. However, I was interested in the word "*méxwéy*" to see if it had some relation to the "*mexw*" in "*Ténéxw*" and "*Xwélmexw*." I asked Rosaleen George about a possible relationship, and she stated "*Méxw*", that's everything, eh? But that's in the beginning of everything there." In a formal linguistic analysis by Galloway (2002 p.c.) there is no relationship between *mexw* in *mexwéya* and the suffix *-mexw* in *ténéxw*. Rosaleen's statement may be the

ancestors who are of the land, and through our umbilical cord, the “mexw” in *méxwəya*, we are connected to our future generations, to the beginning of all things yet to come.

### ***Riverworldview***

River People believe in a Creator who created us and our environment, including a protocol of respect for interacting with that environment, an environment of shared power. Our Halq'eméylem language was born out of our interconnecting interrelationship with the River environment which defined us, gave us our identity. The interconnecting relationships between River People and our River environment permeates our Halq'eméylem language, in our terms for world, *S'ólh Ténéxcw* in origin stories, or *sxwōxwiyám* in 'time' terms, in 'body' terms, in 'house' terms, and in *smstáxcw* the shared power of vitality and thought which requires a protocol of respect in “all our relations.” And so it is, that for River People to speak our Halq'eméylem language is as natural as it is for the Robin to sing its own song.

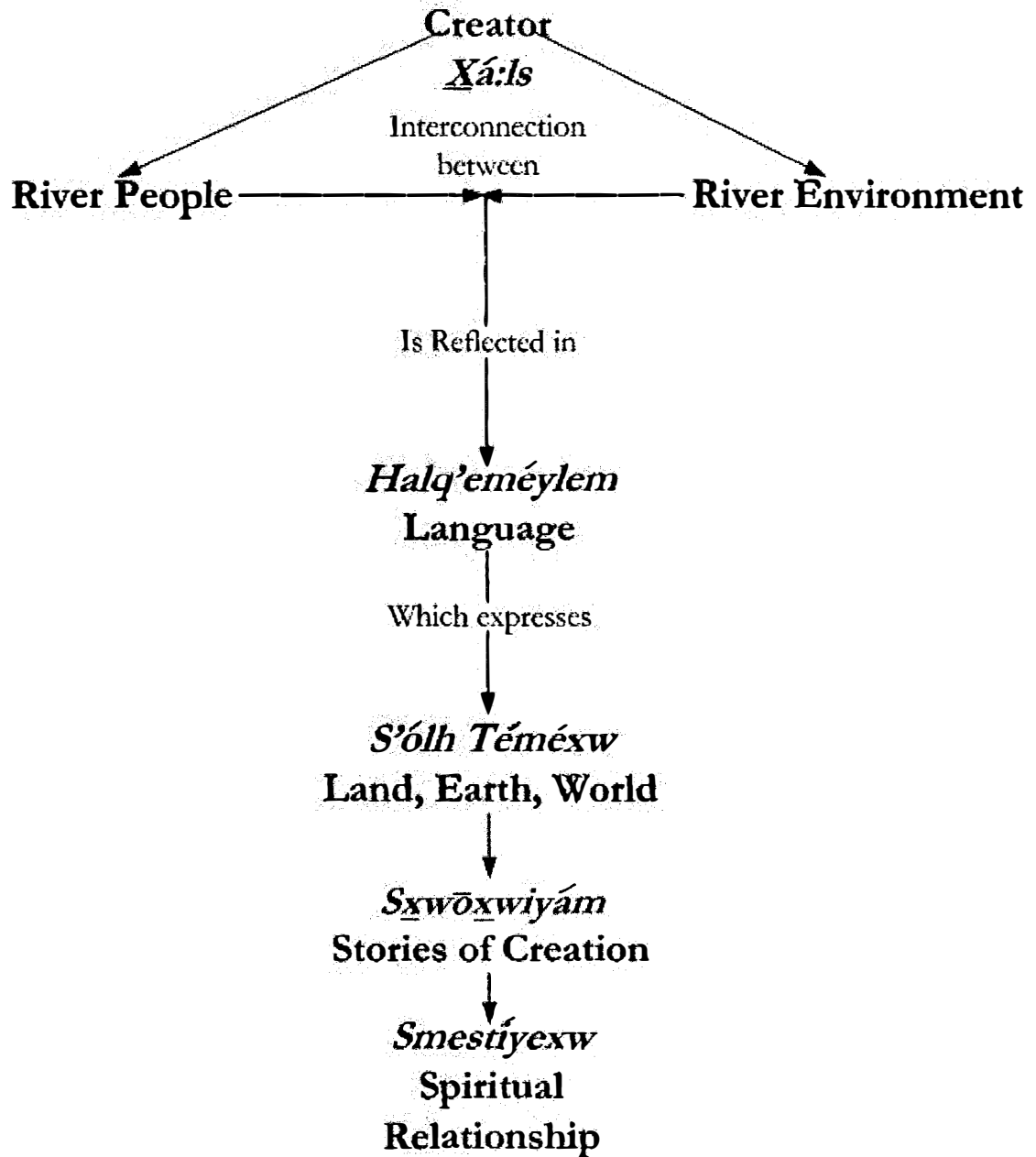
In essence, the place where River People and our River Environment meet is where our understanding of the creator comes from, and is the same place our Halq'eméylem language is derived. Halq'eméylem expresses best the relationship Stó:lō people have with the Creator, with our world, *S'ólh Ténéxcw* and with each other as *Xwélméxcw*. This way of understanding our Halq'eméylem language and its relationship to our River identity and worldview, is “Yú:wqwlha!” I say, “How Beautiful!”

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formation of a folk etymology. Galloway goes on to suggest that Rosaleen may also have been saying “*Mékw* that's everything” since *mékw* is the normal word for ‘all, everything,’ and while it sounds a bit like *méxcw* or *méxw* Galloway also does not believe it is related either. For example, *ikw* means ‘get lost,’ *ícw* means ‘you (subordinate subject),’ and *ícw* means ‘sweep.’”



# Riverworldview



## Chapter 5

### IYÓMEX, ÉYQWLHA, YÚ:WQWLHA<sup>163</sup>

*Language represents the most creative, persuasive aspects of culture, the most intimate side of the human mind. The loss of language diversity will mean that we will never even have the opportunity to appreciate the full creative capacities of the human mind (Mithun, 1998:189).<sup>164</sup>*

*Language is the most massive and inclusive art we know, a millionaires and anonymous work of unconscious generations (Edward Sapir (1921:220))<sup>165</sup>*

Mithun (1998) and Sapir (1921) refer to language as one of the greatest expressions of human creativity, an art. Halq'eméylem represents Stó:lō's linguistic representation of creation, an art that expresses the deep interconnectedness between the Stó:lō and their Riverworld. Halq'eméylem binds the people and Riverworld into an indistinguishable whole, into a Riverworld aesthetic. What does this Riverworld aesthetic mean in Stó:lō peoples' lives today?

This Chapter explores *aesthetics*, the approach I use to conduct and present my research. I draw on Kenny's (1989) concepts of "humans as aesthetic" to establish the nature of the relationship I establish between myself as researcher and my participants, the co-researchers in my study. In 1983, Native scholar, Kenny, began to envision her practice in aesthetic terms. She perceived an improvisational music therapy context as a reflection of a deep value comparable to the Indigenous value of relationship with Mother Earth. She designed a

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<sup>163</sup> The words Éyqwlha and Yú:wqwlha are interjections and their translations were taken from a "Finderlist for Upriver Halq'eméylem Dictionary, put together by linguist Brent Galloway, and is not a published document.

<sup>164</sup> Mithun, p. 189.

theoretical model, the “field of play,” imagining the human person in ecological terms, as a field, a bioregion with all its interactive components of condition as in any Earth space.

Similar to the notion of Halq'eméylem language as art, Kenny described music as the expression that was key in sustaining our connection to the land, in music therapy, or any experience potentially reflective of this dynamic aesthetic link between the Earth and the human person. In her theory, Earth places and the human being are both forms of beauty – aesthetics.

In particular, I use Kenny's theoretical principle, the assumption made that “as one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness, or fullest potential of what one can be in the world.” This befits my research of what Halq'eméylem means in the lives of people who are working to revive their language to bring wholeness to their lives as Stó:lō people. After reading Kenny and other literature on aesthetic, I explore my own understanding of the term from a Stó:lō perspective. I arrive at a definition of aesthetic as an “intuitive synchronicity,” meaning that a thing of beauty creates an awareness of resonating with all of who I am. An aesthetic attitude of empathy and respect describes the kind of relationship I aim to build with my co-researchers in my interactions with them and how I present what they share. I use a creative expression format to present my research, keeping the co-researchers close to their shared experiences in their “poetic monologues.” This process describes the medium I use for involving the reader in a dynamic of “play.” I wish to convey coherence between

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<sup>165</sup> Crystal, p. 40.

Riverworldview, theoretical aspects of Indigenous discourse, academic and theoretical knowledge, and the expression of my research by means of an aesthetic research methodology.

### ***“It’s Really Beautiful”***

“Éyqwlha” is the Stó:lō Halq’eméylem interjection for “Beautiful.” Another word is iyómex, which means “beautiful” or “good looking.” “Yú:wqwlha” is the Halq’eméylem word for “How Beautiful” or “Be Really Beautiful” Good is inherent in the word Éyqwlha, where “Éy” is the word for “Good.” “Yú:w” is the root for Yú:wqwlha. *-qwlha* is a suffix meaning (emphatic admiration), wonderfully, how (emphatically), really! *Yú:w* is an interjection (like all the words formed here with *-qwlha*) and is used when praising something beautiful. Iyomex is the ordinary adjectival verb for “good-looking,” “beautiful,” “handsome,” from *éy* or *iy* for “good” and *-mex* for appearance.<sup>166</sup> When I examine our Halq’eméylem word for “Beautiful” in this way, I am inclined to agree somewhat with Wittgenstein’s idea that the structure of the world is mirrored in the logical structure of language. Wittgenstein opposed philosophers who he believed were trying to create a new ideal language to explain the world and reality, and rather felt that ordinary language was adequate for this purpose.”<sup>167</sup> Wittgenstein’s idea for the work of philosophers was to clarify our use of language,

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<sup>166</sup> Galloway (2002, p.c.) explanations for Iyómex, Éyqwlha and Yú:wqwlha are from his Halq’eméylem Dictionary. He further explains that Yú:w is related to *yó:wthet*, the word for “bragging.” *-thet* is a suffix maning “do to oneself,” thus *yó:wthet* means “praise oneself – bragging.”

<sup>167</sup> Gordon Hunnings. (1988). *The World and Language in Wittgenstein’s Philosophy*. Albany: State University of New York Press Hunnings, p.1

*The task of philosophy is not to create a new ideal language, but to clarify the use of our language, the existing language. Its aim is to remove particular misunderstandings, not to produce a real understanding for the first time.*<sup>168</sup>

Wittgenstein reflects my own skepticism of what philosophers try to do in their quest for rendering intelligible the nature of what is real. However, my own skepticism stems from my belief in what the elders mean when they say, “Our cultures and our worldviews are embedded in our Aboriginal languages.” What I call my “healthy skepticism” of philosophy is a skepticism of Western philosophy which does not represent Stó:lō Halq’eméylem language, and therefore, cannot easily represent Stó:lō Halq’eméylem thought. However, we need not throw out the baby with the bath water, so to speak - because we all love the baby. We can use the tools of Western Philosophy to see our Aboriginal world in a new way, to accentuate and reveal our own distinctive worldview. Phenomenological inquiry, for example, focuses on personal experience as one of its primary goals to understand rather than explain the real world, to understand human experience as it is experienced.<sup>169</sup> In this light, I will examine how Western Philosophy can help us understand world(s) of “beauty” or “aesthetics” through the views of one Aboriginal scholar. I will present an exploratory piece synthesizing my understanding of aesthetics, and will develop an aesthetic approach for conducting my research in examining how the Halq’eméylem aesthetic manifests in peoples’ lives today.

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 211

<sup>169</sup> Valerie Malhotra Bentz and Jeremy J. Shapiro. (1998). *Mindful Inquiry in Social Research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications. Chapter 7, *Phenomenological Inquiry*, pp 96-104.

## *Kenny's Aesthetics*

Carolyn Kenny (1989) outlines the philosophical views that form the foundation for building her concept of “*aesthetics*,” and this is where I begin to develop my own deeper understanding of the term. Kenny builds her concept of “*aesthetics*” on the works of Polanyi, Kuhn, and Eisner, and on Phenomenological Inquiry, Hermeneutics, Heuristic Inquiry, Systems, and Fields. In particular, Kenny resonates with the Navajo worldview of *hózhó*, or beauty as a way of life. Indeed, her exploration of a field theory was inspired by the following Navajo prayer

*With beauty before me, I walk*  
*With beauty behind me, I walk*  
*With beauty above me, I walk*  
*With beauty below me, I walk*  
*From the East beauty has been restored*  
*From the South beauty has been restored*  
*From the West beauty has been restored*  
*From the North beauty has been restored*  
*From the zenith in the sky beauty has been restored*  
*From the nadir of the earth beauty has been restored*  
*From all around me beauty has been restored (Witherspoon, p. 153-4)<sup>170</sup>*

This important prayer, used so often in Navajo ceremony helped Kenny to imagine the human person as a field or environment as an “*aesthetic*,” a form of beauty. Witherspoon (1977) elaborates the core of the Navajo worldview in his work, **Language and Art in the Navajo Universe**. The value for living in beauty is described at length. In this important work, as

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<sup>170</sup> Gary Witherspoon (1977). *Language and Art in the Navajo Universe*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

Mithun and Sapir, Witherspoon (1977) situates language within the context of art, and therefore germane in the aesthetic discourse.

From Polanyi, Kenny draws the idea that “we do not have knowledge outside of our experience,” and from Kuhn’s development of the concept of *community innovation* which reveals itself in similarities of thought.<sup>171</sup> From these ideas I glean that my own personal experience can be understood within the context of a community, such as Stó:lō and other and Indigenous communities. Eisner, Kenny states, claimed that an artistic approach is associated with the discovery of meaning, while science is associated with the search for truth. Eisner stresses that it is important to create images people will find meaningful “from which their fallible and tentative views of the world can be altered, rejected or made more secure.”<sup>172</sup> The artist creates images subjectively, and presents it as an object to the audience as a reference. In this way, the sensibilities of artist and scientist are utilized, concerning both truth and meaning, objectivity and subjectivity.

Phenomenological inquiry suits artistic research in the creation of images because it is concerned with direct experiences of a phenomenon<sup>173</sup>. In this light, Existential Phenomenologists define a link between sensation, or direct experience, and perception. Sensation is direct experience because of its relation to physicality, and translates into mental constructs such as perceptions, thought forms and feelings. Sensations connect mind and

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<sup>171</sup> Carolyn Kenny (1989). *The Field of Play: a Guide for the Theory and Practice of Music Therapy*. Atascadero: Ridgeview Publishing Company. P. 48

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 49.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 50.

body<sup>174</sup>, and when this happens we become conscious of the world, of things of beauty. Kenny defines consciousness as the space between self and the world, and sees this dynamic as the gateway to change in human development and healing<sup>175</sup>. The heart of the phenomenological method is in the examination of examples, pictures or images of a phenomenon to determine its essential elements<sup>176</sup>, in as much as they “bring to the light of day” the phenomenon being examined.

While phenomenology seeks the essences of a phenomenon, hermeneutics poses a science of interpretation, with the assumption that one cannot understand a phenomenon or an act without understanding the context in which it occurs, including historical and cultural considerations<sup>177</sup>.

Heuristics is a search for the discovery of meaning and essence in significant human experience with a belief that self-experience is the most important guideline in the pursuit of knowledge. One only knows what one has experienced in the self. The researcher’s perch is of special significance in this line of methodological thinking. Any research project can be considered a design of the researcher’s world-view, or some aspect of that view, because one can only create out of what one knows to be true and meaningful in the self, then in relation to the world<sup>178</sup>. Heuristics encourages the researcher to go wide open and to pursue an original

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<sup>174</sup> Ibid., p. 53.

<sup>175</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>177</sup> Ibid. p. 59-60.

<sup>178</sup> Ibid. p. 60-61.



path that has its origins within the self and that discovers its direction and meaning within the self. It guides human beings in the process of asking questions about phenomena that disturb and challenge their own existence<sup>179</sup>.

Systems thinkers accept wholeheartedly the challenge to view the universe not as a collection of physical objects but rather as a complicated web of relations between the various parts of a unified whole<sup>180</sup>. Kenny cites Eliade who articulated the link between phenomenology and systems in that one is constantly asking oneself about the essence of a set of phenomena and about the primordial order that is the basis of their meaning. In response to Eliade's primordial order, Arguelles contended that we have lost the sense of the natural order through a state of *holonomic amnesia*, amnesia of the order that existed before technological advance. He stated that we can recover our sense of the natural order by allowing our consciousness to travel through *aboriginal continuity*, an intuitive level of awareness which retains the sense and structure of the primordial order. Arguelles saw art as representing the mode of *aboriginal continuity* and attached great importance to the activities of art and creative process in order to do away with *holonomic amnesia*. Arguelles saw *aboriginal continuity* as a critical complement to the *civilization advance*, which reflects our logical and technological knowings<sup>181</sup>.

Field thinkers, Kenny states, carry the imprint of the holonomic design from the general systems tradition. However, their discrete characteristics have to do with their tendency to view boundaries as unnatural, and as mere assumptions created for the convenience of

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid. p. 62.

<sup>180</sup> Ibid. p. 62-63.

understanding and articulation. Because the field is considered infinite in many ways, field theorists believe that only aspects of it can be described and their influence articulated at any point in time and space. Field thinking represents the position of maximum interdependence among elements. The field is always an environment in which any point can represent the whole through the vision of an organic creative process. Field theory is expressed in formative terms, that is, in terms of patterns, relations, ratios as opposed to numbers, and processes as opposed to objects affecting each other<sup>182</sup>.

Humans as fields. The concept of “the field” allows focus and appreciation of that which is in the field, including the conditions and relationships among the participants contained within this space. Kenny states, “We are prisoners of our conditions - limited and bound. Yet conditions are also paradoxically what allow us to grow, expand and change<sup>183</sup>.” She then frames the human person - the researcher or co-researcher, in my application of this concept, as a field full of conditions, - an environment - “similar to the alpine meadow, the swamp, the prairie, and full of beauty, surrounded by beauty.” Finally, co-researcher, being a field of beauty, is whole and complete, unique, an aesthetic.<sup>184</sup>

### ***Fields of Beauty: Humans as Aesthetic***

*Kenny's Definition: The aesthetic is a field of beauty which is the human person. This field contains all non-verbal cues, which are communicated by the individual in being and acting and are perceived through the intuitive function. The aesthetic is an environment in which the conditions include the individual's human*

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<sup>181</sup> Ibid. p. 64-65.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid. p. 65-66.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid. p. 73.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid. p. 74

*tendencies, values, attitudes, life experience and all factors which unite to create the whole and complete form of beauty, which is the person*<sup>185</sup>.

Kenny further elaborates her definition of aesthetics, which applies to the researcher/co-researcher context of my method of research based on an aesthetic process.

### Principles of Aesthetic

- 1. An aesthetic represents that which one carries and communicates into the world based on the screening system of choices and judgments regarding that which one considers to be "beautiful." (Assumption: As one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness, or the fullest potential of what one can be in the world.)*
- 2. An aesthetic represents the conditions one establishes by "being one who is" in relation to self and others.*
- 3. The [researcher] invites the [co-researcher] into her field to engage in actions designed by the [researcher]. Since expression is the creative force, the action actualizes the aesthetic.*<sup>186</sup>

The music therapist uses musical space as the medium for formative creative expression which is shared between therapist and client. My and my co-researchers' love for our Halq'eméylem language and discussions of our efforts to revive it will be our musical space. Our interview sessions on this topic will be our actions toward creating a deep understanding of our process of language revival, and what it means in the contexts of our everyday lives.

Kenny's philosophical foundation for the development of her theory of aesthetics begins with Phenomenology, which is the study of the essences of a thing, and then to hermeneutics, the interpretation of a thing, which considers contexts such as history and culture. Heuristics

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<sup>185</sup> Ibid. p. 75.

emphasizes the importance of the researcher's own experience in understanding challenging human phenomena. Systems theory takes us beyond the thing itself and has us consider its relations within an integrated whole. Here we are introduced to the idea of an intuitive level of awareness of a primordial order. Finally, fields theory represents the position of maximum interdependence among elements, with conditions. The following is a synopsis which illustrates how Kenny's Theory of Aesthetics develops from the philosophical foundations she uses to build it.

<i>Nawjo worldview</i>	<i>walking in beauty</i>
<i>Phenomenology</i>	<i>study of a thing, its essences</i>
<i>Hermeneutics</i>	<i>an interpretation of a thing in time and in culture</i>
<i>Heuristics</i>	<i>an individual's role in understanding human experience</i>
<i>Systems</i>	<i>a thing as part of an integrated whole, intuition implied</i>
<i>Field</i>	<i>maximum interdependence among elements, conditions</i>
<i>Aesthetic</i>	<i>field of beauty, (w)holistic form of energy (i.e., a human)</i>

Chapters 2, 3 & 4 in this study provide a backdrop context leading up to an understanding of Riverworldview that binds *S'dlb Ténéxcw*, *Halq'éréylem*, *Sxwixwiyám* and *Xwélméxcw* into an aesthetic whole. The following excerpt is an exploratory piece, or heuristic, derived from my personal and direct experiences with ideas of beauty and from this Stó:lō person's perspective having read and assimilated Kenny's and others' ideas of aesthetics.

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<sup>186</sup> Ibid. p. 77-78. Kenny describes her principles of aesthetics.

## **Personal Reflections on Aesthetic**

*I assume myself to be Stóóló. When I know who I am as a Stóóló person, I feel like a whole person. When I assume myself to be a whole person, I am healthy, vibrant, I know who I am, and can reflect a vibrant, healthy self-knowledge back to the world.*

*If I see the world, and I do not see myself reflected there, and I do not know what my reflection should look like, my image is fractured. I need the tools to become enabled to see myself whole.*

*Is there nothing more beautiful than a new born baby, fresh and innocent? When I see a thing of beauty, my emotions are stirred. There is a recognition, an insight, a re-patterning, a perfect fit. What is it about a new born baby that stirs the emotions so? Baby soft, cuddly, cute, warm, needy. Does the baby remind us of ourselves, a wish for a fresh start, a clean slate, hope for the future? Survival of the human race? Newness? Freshness? taking me beyond myself?*

*The wonder of snowflakes, each one of billions different, yet made of the same stuff, intrigues us, delights us, reflecting our own uniqueness. Taste a snowflake on the tip of your tongue, now water, cool, tickling.*

*A whole person is coherent, can see beauty reflected in wholeness, can see resonance of self. What are things of beauty? Traffic that runs like dodecwork, a balanced pattern, surprise. Words that relate to beauty. "new, fresh, surprise, clean, resonate, crisp."*

*Beauty touches you deep down inside of you, resonates with the you that is whole. The more you feel whole, the more you recognize the beauty that resonates with you.*

*Rhythmic Cycles*

*Nature's Cycles*

*The ultimate form of beauty is non-judgmentalness. Judgment confines, non-judgmentalness frees. That is, to say that openness allows room for more, boundaries limit.*

*I assure myself to be Stó:lō. I resonate my Stó:lō-ness, I resonate with what is Stó:lō. If I do not have a strong sense of who I am, I cannot function as a whole human being.*

*When I hear my language, I feel emotional. When I see a Stó:lō elder speak Halq'əníc̓yem, my emotions well up inside. It's the coming to be whole, a recognition, a resonance of something deep inside that wants to take form, to understand itself.*

*Form, Understanding*

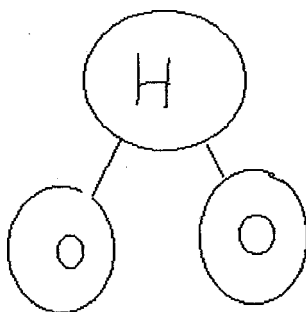
*Yes, tears well up in my eyes at the wonder of becoming what I always knew I was. It's in my blood, it's in the land, it's in the naming, naming me.*

*So they could keep on giving.. Xá:l̓s turned a generous person into a Cedar Tree. The beauty of the concept of a Cedar Tree is in the relationship the Stó:lō established with it for mutual benefit, a reciprocal relationship. Our relationship is based on respect, reverence and responsibility. For we receive wealth, beauty and protection from the Cedar, i.e.*

<i>Brushing with Cedar</i>	<i>Washing with Cedar</i>	<i>Cedar bough floors</i>
<i>Blankets</i>	<i>Cedar Baskets</i>	<i>Planks</i>
<i>Red</i>	<i>Yellow</i>	<i>Hats</i>
<i>Dresses</i>	<i>Skirts</i>	<i>Capes</i>
<i>Bracelets</i>	<i>Headbands</i>	<i>Rope</i>
<i>Bark</i>	<i>Aroma</i>	<i>Canoes</i>
<i>Chips</i>		

*My Definition of Aesthetic: Something beautiful that makes me laugh or smile, something that is witty, clever, whimsical, spiritual. It is that space, or field which connects the patterns, a recognition of the connections, an intuitive synchronicity.*

H<sub>2</sub>O



*In a molecule of water, it is not so much the fact that there are two oxygen atoms and one hydrogen atom that make them interesting, but that when they connect, they become something else - a molecule of water. If you throw in another element, i.e. motion, something new and interesting happens. If moving fast, they become gas, if moving slowly they become hard ice. Many molecules of water moving together is a River, or Stórló. It is the patterns, or relationships, that make the matter interesting. It is the unique patterns, or relationships we encounter that touch our spirit, that is spirit, or is smestýexw.*

*Smestýexw is a Halq'enyem word which means "vitality and thought" together, a quality shared among humans, animals and inanimate things. A world in which vitality and thought are shared requires a protocol of relationship that is based on respect. Matter is physical. Relationship is spiritual, and recalls the teachings of Xá'als who was sent to the world "to put things right." Sometimes, it seems, that when we recognize the aesthetic in something, our only way of understanding the phenomenon is that it "feels right," resonates, fits.*

And so it is, an artistic approach to research allows the broadest of possibilities to emerge in moving toward wholeness, toward creating meaning in one's understanding of a phenomenon, a process, a field.

## ***Metaphor: The Artistry of Lived Experience***

A few of the ideas outlined have been tentative, i.e. Why are images useful in moving toward wholeness, understanding? What is an intuitive level of awareness? What does Polanyi's statement mean when he says, "we do not have knowledge outside of our experience?" Why is an empathetic, or respectful, regard in research so important rather than a detached objective view? Lakoff and Johnson (1999) provide ground-breaking insights into these kinds of questions. They outline three major findings of cognitive science which challenge Western philosophical views of how we think about the world and about reality.<sup>187</sup>

1. *The mind is inherently embodied*
2. *Thought is mostly unconscious*
3. *Abstract concepts are largely metaphorical*

An *embodied mind* means that reason is shaped by the peculiarities of our human bodies, by the remarkable details of the neural structure of our brains,<sup>188</sup> and by the specifics of our everyday functioning in the world<sup>188</sup>. Unconscious thought, or "*cognitive unconscious*," constitutes our unreflective common sense, and shapes how we automatically and unconsciously comprehend abstract concepts and other aspects of our experience<sup>189</sup>. *Abstract concepts* such as love, causation and morality are conceptualized using multiple complex metaphors. Each complex metaphor is built up out of primary metaphors.

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<sup>187</sup> Lakoff and Johnson (1999) *Philosophy in the Flesh: The Embodied Mind and Its Challenge to Western Thought*. New York: Basic Books.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid. p. 4.

<sup>189</sup> Ibid., pp. 12-13.



Lakoff & Johnson's (1999) development of *A Philosophy in the Flesh* takes Polanyi's statement that "we do not have knowledge outside of our experience," and locates our knowing directly in our bodies, and not in some abstract "self" which only has its home in the body. Philosophy in the flesh would say that we do not have knowledge outside our bodies, and that knowledge is created with our bodies as a reference from which primary metaphor is developed. Primary metaphors neurally connect domains of sensorimotor and subjective experience. We acquire primary metaphors automatically and unconsciously through the normal process of neural learning from our earliest years by functioning in the most ordinary ways in our everyday lives<sup>190</sup>. The following example shows how metaphor allows sensory domain imagery to be used for domains of subjective experience.

*Sensorimotor experience - something going by or over our heads*

*Subjective experience - failure to understand*

Here, we can gain a vivid understanding of "failing to understand" using the image of a gesture tracing the path of "something going past us or over our heads<sup>191</sup>." At any point in time, we can draw on a totality of numerous primary metaphors which provide our subjective experience with extremely rich inferential structure, imagery, and qualitative "feel."<sup>192</sup> Our intuitive level of awareness, then, is drawn from the sum total of our automatic and implicit knowledge which is referred to here as the "cognitive unconscious."

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<sup>190</sup> Ibid., p. 47.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

Complex metaphors are built up from primary metaphors and into multiple complex metaphors. For example, if the metaphorical ways of conceptualizing *love* were taken away, not a whole lot would be left. How would we understand *love* without the metaphors of “physical force, i.e., attraction, electrical magnetism; and without union, madness, illness, magic, nurturance, journeys, closeness, heat, or giving of oneself?”<sup>193</sup> When we reason and talk about *love*, we import inferential structure and language from other conceptual domains. The cognitive mechanism we use is cross-domain conceptual mapping.<sup>194</sup> Using primary, complex and multiple complex metaphors allows us to use a wide breadth of cross-domain conceptual mappings to create deeper understandings of the meaning of our bodily based and subjective experiences. Imaginative processes, then, of metaphor, imagery, metonymy, prototypes, frames, mental spaces, and radial categories are central to conceptualization and reason<sup>195</sup>, and allows our conceptual system to expand into new revelatory understandings.<sup>196</sup> Kenny (1999) sums up the value of metaphor beautifully as follows:

*Metaphor can bring something hidden to life because it can embody some aspect of our experience which is difficult to name or describe on its own terms. With metaphor, we hope for a referential totality. The metaphor may not be a total representation. However, it has a “sense” of the totality of our expression<sup>197</sup>.*

This conceptualization of the use of metaphor from both Kenny(1999) and Lakoff & Johnson (1999) validates the use of an artistic approach to understanding the meaning of a

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<sup>193</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>194</sup> Ibid., p. 71.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid., p. 565.

phenomenon such as that of research into what Halq'eméylem revitalization means to Stó:lō people in a contemporary context. Metaphor, or cross-domain conceptual mapping, expressed in the words (worlds) of my co-researchers shared experiences will bring to light new revelatory understanding of the phenomenon we are exploring together.

### *Aesthetic Attitude and Indigenous Codes of Conduct*

“An embodied spirituality,” say Lakoff and Johnson (1999), “requires an aesthetic attitude to the world...” This statement leads me into a new discussion on what is an “aesthetic attitude?” Or, how do we perceive an object aesthetically? How does an aesthetic attitude reflect a protocol of respect and harmony? According to Jerome Stolnitz (1998), our attitudes determine how we perceive the world, are ways of directing and controlling our perception, and prepare us to respond to what we perceive<sup>198</sup>. He suggests a definition of aesthetic attitude, as “*disinterested and sympathetic attention to and contemplation of any object of awareness whatever, for its own sake alone.*” He further unpacks this definition by defining its key concepts as follows:

“*disinterested*” “the aesthetic attitude isolates the object and focuses upon it - the ‘look’ of the rocks, the sound of the ocean, the colours in the painting. Hence the object is not seen in a fragmentary or passing manner. Its whole nature and character are dwelt upon.”<sup>199</sup>

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<sup>197</sup> Carolyn Kenny (1999). “*Beyond This Point There Be Dragons: Developing General Theory in Music Theory.*” Nordic Journal of Music Therapy.

<sup>198</sup> Jerome Stolnitz (1998). *The Aesthetic Attitude*. In *Aesthetics: The Big Question*. Carolyn Korsmeyer, Ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 80. The Halq'eméylem translation of disinterested as defined here would be *Let's'elít qesu wíyt te squálewel xwálm testáms*. (Literally “(separate it)(and so)(fix it)(the)(thoughts/feelings)(toward)(the)(something).”) (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)

“*sympathetic*” the way in which we prepare ourselves to respond to the object. When we apprehend an object aesthetically, we do so in order to relish its individual quality, whether the object be charming, stirring, vivid, or all of the above. If we are to appreciate it, we must accept the object “on its own terms.” To be “sympathetic” in aesthetic experience means to give the object the “chance” to show how it can be interesting to perception<sup>200</sup>.

We come now to the word “*attention*” in our definition of “aesthetic attitude.” In taking the aesthetic attitude, we want to make the value of the object come fully alive in our experience. Therefore, we focus our attention upon the object and “key up” our capacities of imagination and emotion to respond to it. To whatever extent it does so, experience is aesthetic only when an object “holds” our attention. Aesthetic attention is accompanied by activity, i.e., tapping one’s foot to rhythmic sound, walking around a sculpture to view all sides. To savour fully the distinctive value of the object, we must be attentive to its complex and subtle details. As we develop discriminating attention the work comes alive to us<sup>201</sup>.

“*Contemplation*” sums up the definition. It means perception is directed to the object in its own right and that the spectator is not concerned to analyze it or ask questions about it. Also, the word connotes thoroughgoing absorption and interest, as when we speak of being, “lost in contemplation.” The object of aesthetic perception stands out from its environment and

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<sup>200</sup> Ibid., pp. 80-81. *Éjstexw* translates as ‘enjoy and appreciate something’ and is the closest to the term sympathetic in the sense defined here (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 82. *Thít te sqwálewel* means ‘concentrate, fix one’s thoughts/feelings’ and this is the same as focus one’s attention.” (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)

rivets our interest. The aesthetic attitude can be adopted toward “any object of awareness whatever<sup>202</sup>.”

Lakoff and Johnson (1999) state that “Empathy – the focused, imaginative experience of the other – is the precondition for nurturant morality.” Through empathic projection, we can understand how we are part of our environment and of how it is part of us. We participate in nature as part of nature herself, as part of a larger, all-encompassing whole through a mindful embodied spirituality, an ecological spirituality. Embodied spirituality, then, is an ethical relationship to the physical world<sup>203</sup>, where empathetic projection onto anything or anyone, according to Lakoff & Johnson (1999), is contact with God, and carries the responsibility to care for that with which we empathize<sup>204</sup>. How similar is this idea to an Aboriginal conception of our relationship as humans to our environment? Douglas Cardinal (1991) states,

*Aboriginal cultures evolved into a way of being in touch with the earth, and experiencing the reality of being part of the earth. For this reason the cultures are based in harmony as a way of being.*<sup>205</sup>

An aesthetic attitude based on empathy and respect defines succinctly the kind of approach I assume with the co-researchers in my study of what Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language revitalization means in the context of peoples' lives. This approach is similar to other indigenous scholars' ideas for conducting research based on indigenous principles. Linda

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid, p. 83. A Halq'eméylem term for “contemplating” is the root *te* which means ‘contemplate, study; *totilt* is the word that means ‘studying, learning, thinking about something, training for something.’ (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)

<sup>203</sup> Lakoff & Johnson (1999). p.566

<sup>204</sup> Ibid, p.577.

<sup>205</sup> Douglas Cardinal & Jeannette Armstrong. (1991). *The Native Creative Process, A Collaborative Discourse between Douglas Cardinal and Jeannette Armstrong*. Penicton: Theytus Books, p. 12.

Tuhiwai Smith (1999) discusses how codes of conduct for researchers are prescribed for Maori researchers reflected in the following Maori cultural terms:

1. *Aroha ki te tangata (a respect for people).*
2. *Kanohi kitea (the seen face, that is present yourself to people face to face).*
3. *Titiro whakarongo... korero (look, listen... speak).*
4. *Manaaki ki te tangata (share and host people, be generous)*
5. *Kia tupato (be cautious).*
6. *Kaua e takahia te mana o te tangata (do not trample over the mana of people).*
7. *Kaua e mahaki (don't flaunt your knowledge).*

Smith states that from indigenous perspectives, ethical codes of conduct serve the same purpose as the protocols which govern our relationships with each other and with the environment, and that respect keeps balance in the world, and involves reciprocity and sharing in all our interactions.<sup>206</sup> Similarly, Jo-ann Archibald's a theory of Stó:lō and Coast Salish storywork (1997), incorporates principles of *respect, responsibility, reciprocity, reverence, wholism, inter-relatedness, and synergy*, to get to the “core” of making meaning with and through stories.<sup>207</sup>

### ***Play: “The Intelligence of the Heart”***

Kenny's theoretical work emphasizes the “interplay” between aesthetic fields. This inter-play establishes the dynamic exchange reflected in the creative process. In order for our

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<sup>206</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London & New York: Zed Books Ltd. pp.119-120.

<sup>207</sup> Jo-ann Archibald. (1997). *Coyote Learns to Make a Storybasket: The Place of First Nations Stories in Education*. Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy. Simon Fraser University. p. 212.

Halq'eméylem language to survive and thrive, there must be such an interplay, such a creative process. This field of play brings growth and change. The presentation of the co-researchers' words, using a creative expression format, aims through its process of development, to provide a medium for involving the reader in a dynamic of "play." Gadamer (1998) characterizes the relationship between the perceiver and the work of art as one of "play." He maintains that the concept of play illustrates our experience of works of art because it overcomes the division between perceiver and object of perception and captures the way we become absorbed in art objects. Gadamer emphasizes the cognitive value of aesthetic experience, maintaining that art affords insight and knowledge of the world and of ourselves<sup>208</sup>. Play, he states, has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play<sup>209</sup>, and he calls this change, in which human play comes to its true culmination in being art, transformation into structure. By this, Gadamer means that "In being presented in play, what is emerges. It produces and brings to light what is otherwise constantly hidden and withdrawn<sup>210</sup>."

Kenny's definition (1989) of "Creative process" culminates the development of her conceptualization of the *field of play*, characterizing it as a self-organizing system, moving toward wholeness:

*Definition: The creative process is the interplay of forms, gestures and relationships, which as a whole constitute the context for a movement toward wholeness. It is an existential being and acting which is not product-oriented and which appreciates each emerging moment as the*

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<sup>208</sup> Gadamer, Hans-Georg. (1998). *From Truth and Method*. In *Aesthetics: The Big Question*. Carolyn Korsmeyer, Ed. Malden: Blackwell Publishing. p.75-76.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid., p.94.

<sup>210</sup> Ibid., p.97.

*only moment in time, yet acknowledges the past with attention for possible future movement.  
It is informed by love, the intelligence of the heart, and thus the knowledge of the self-  
organizing system...*<sup>211</sup>

And so it is, with an aesthetic attitude that I enter into conversations with my co-researchers, assuming a protocol of empathy and respect. The conversations use ordinary everyday language to extract extraordinary meaning from how people function in the most ordinary ways in their everyday lives. In my presentation of the research, I craft the co-researchers' interviews into "poetic monologues," keeping the co-researchers close to the depictions of their experience, to reveal in their own right what it means in the context of their lives to be involved in Halq'eméylem language revitalization. The monologues reflect Gadamer's "transformation into structure" and Kenny's "movement toward wholeness" and aims to engage the reader in a dynamic of *play* to bring to light a little understood phenomenon.

My approach as an Aboriginal scholar requires me to see the world through my Stó:lō eyes and to represent that worldview in my work. Using an aesthetic approach allows me the kind of freedom of expression I need to explore unique cross-domain conceptual mappings, or unique ways of understanding the world, which are specific to a Stó:lō worldview. One need only to examine the rich imaginative stories and legends of our people to see that the aesthetic approach I propose is culturally appropriate for creating understanding of a phenomenon or experience. My definition below of Aesthetic, I believe, reflects closely the nature of many Stó:lō stories and legends.

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<sup>211</sup> Kenny (1989), p.89.



*My Definition of Aesthetic Something beautiful that makes me laugh or smile, something that is witty, clever, whimsical, spiritual. It is that space, or field which connects the patterns, a recognition of the connections, an intuitive synchronicity*

Finally, it is Santayana's definition of beauty in **The Sense of Beauty Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory** (1955), which most closely reflects the Halq'eméylem word for beauty, "Éyqwlha."

*Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing... a positive value, that is intrinsic; it is a pleasure<sup>212</sup> (31-32)... the dearest manifestation of perfection, and the best evidence of its possibility... a pledge of the possible conformity between the soul and nature, and consequently a ground of faith in the supremacy of the good<sup>213</sup>.*

Both the "good" and the "pleasure" elements are included in the word "Éyqwlha," which sums up in a great many ways what this whole discussion has been about. "Yú:wqwlha," I say, "How beautiful!" In the next chapters, I invite you to come and journey with me to the land where there are "always wild strawberries."

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<sup>212</sup> George Santayana (1955). *The Sense of Beauty Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory*. New York: Dover Publication.p.31-32.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 164.



Back row: *Tyàle* Diana Charlie, *Katalilla* Catalina Rentaria, *Chùti*, Judy Douglas, *St:tel á:la* Laura Lee Kelly, *Kerholerstol* Helen Carr, *Stelomethet* Ethel Gardner, *Seliselwet* Bibiana Modeste, *Maliyel* Marion Harris, *Verley* Ned, *Koyàlemót* Mary Stewart. Front row: *Yómalot* Rosaleen George, *Howlájia* Eunice Ned, *Ts'ats'elexwót* Elizabeth Herrling, *Tseloyóthelwet* Shirley Julian, *Épelel* Evelyn Pennier. Kneeling in front: *T'it'elem Spá:th* Eddie Gardner (photo credit). Linguistics class outside *Stó:lō* Shxwél's portable classroom (1999).



*St:tel á:la* Laura Lee Kelly, *Howlájia* Eunice Ned, *Katella* Catalina Rentaria, *Chùti* Judy Douglas, *Épelel* Evelyn Pennier, Mary Anderson (*Lil'wat*) and her son. Linguist Strang Burton is in the back. Graduating class of the SCES Linguistics Proficiency Certificate Program. (Photo credit, *Stó:lō* Shxweli, 2000).



Representatives of Stó:lō Nation, SFU, BC College of Teachers, First Nations Education Steering Committee on December 6, 2001 at the approval of the Sto:lo Nation/Simon Fraser University proposal for a Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in Halq'eméylem Language and Culture, a first in B.C.'s history. Stó:lō Elders *Yómalot* Rosaleen George and *Siyámlálexw* in the front. **First row standing:** Debbie Leighton-Stephens Chair of the FNEC Aboriginal Language Sub-Committee, *Stelómethet* Ethel Gardner, Dorothy Drew (Vice-Chair of Council and elected member from Surrey) Patti Coldicutt (Chair of Teacher Education Programs Committee), Judith Giles (Past Chair of Teacher Education Programs Committee), Christa Williams (Executive Director of FNEC). **Back row:** Doug Smart (Registrar), Percy Austin (elected member of the Council of the College of Teachers from the Fraser Valley), Dave Gunderson (Chair of the Council and elected member from Okanagan), Marie Crowther (Director of Certification), Marie Kerchum (Deputy Registrar), Laura Bickerton (Director of Teacher Education Programs), Derek Payne (FNEC Program Administrator, previously Stó:lō Nation Education Comptroller), Shoysq whet Gwen Point (Stó:lō Nation Education Manager). (Photo Credit, Krystyn Smolen, 2001)



*Linguist Lawéchten* Brent Galloway and *Stelómethet* Ethel Gardner  
In the background, *Seliselwet* Bibiana Modeste and Marilyn (Gardner) Farebrother (2002).

## Chapter 6

### GATHERING WILD STRAWBERRIES

“Gathering wild strawberries” refers to how I approached acquiring and presenting the richly shared experiences of my co-researchers, the nine Stó:lō people who participated in our study. They shared generously, and with enthusiasm, the sadness, hope and joys of Halq’eméylem language work, all bundled into an hour to an hour-and-half of interview time each. My emotions stir every time I re-read through each “poetic monologue,” reliving how each person disclosed to me their innemost thoughts about their involvement with Halq’eméylem renewal.

My research stemmed from wanting to understand my own life experience, but learning Halq’eméylem linguistics in a class of Halq’eméylem revivalists served as the catalyst for arriving at my topic. I was in awe of these people who were persevering to learn whatever they could of the language. They understood that they were learning something very precious and that they would be shouldered with the responsibility of carrying this learning to others. This class included some twenty people, mainly women. Elders usually presided in these classes; they were Yómalot, Ts’áts’eloxwót, younger elder, Tseloyóthelwet (Shirley Julian) and sometimes Xwiyólemot (Tillie Gutierrez). The classes were part of the SFU/SCES Halq’eméylem Linguistics Proficiency Certificate Program taught variously by Strang Burton (sometimes co-facilitated with Martina Wiltschco), Brent Galloway, Susan Russell, and Suzanne Urbancyk. I knew Burton from our collaborative work at U.B.C., where I was employed as the Associate Director of the First Nations House of Learning. He was doing

post-doctoral studies there at the time, and suggested that I should participate in the course offered in Sardis.

In the fall of 1997, I was travelling by bus from Vancouver to Chilliwack once a week to participate in the linguistics class. I sensed immediately that my classmates knew they were participating in something special, something unique, and timely. Students would bring food to share. A great deal of reverence was shown toward the elders who were always ready to receive hugs and exchange smiles and laughter. Students addressed each other in Halq'eméylem, "*Láw! Líbexw'we éyo?*" and a common response was "*Ts'ats'el é!*" It was a class like no other in which I ever had participated, and I looked forward enthusiastically to this weekly trip. After I began my research, I continued to participate in Halq'eméylem linguistics courses.

Conducting my research on Halq'eméylem language renewal required following specific protocol with Stó:lō Nation. Accompanied by a letter dated February 10, 1998, I sent my research proposal to Gwen Point, the Education Manager of Community Development for Stó:lō Nation (Appendix I). On September 9, 1998, Gwen invited me to Stó:lō Nation to meet with her and others who would compose my steering committee. The committee included Sonny McHalsie, a Stó:lō cultural expert; Keith Carlson, researcher; and David Smith, archivist. Except for Gwen, they all worked for Stó:lō Nation's Department of Aboriginal Rights and Title.

My first instructions were to exercise sensitivity in working with the elders so that their time and energy would not be taxed. They were often called upon to share their rare knowledge of Halq'eméylem and Stó:lō culture. Secondly, I was asked to submit a description of my research project to the Stó:lō Archives, which was approved by the Executive Director of Stó:lō Nation's Aboriginal Rights and Title Department, Clarence Pennier (Appendix II). Third, I was asked to request my co-researchers to sign a consent form to have their taped interviews submitted to the Stó:lō Archives, and finally, that I submit a copy of my final research paper to the Archives (Appendix III). I had little contact with the "steering committee" regarding the development of my paper, other than receiving instructions at the initial meeting. David Smith, Archivist, kindly helped me locate materials from the Stó:lō Archives and provided me with consent forms to include collected data from participants in the Archives. In October 2000, I sent the required forms to the University Ethics review committee, including the required consent forms and interview guide, and was informed in a letter dated November 6, 2000, that my research was approved (Appendix IV).

My research into the issues of Stó:lō identity and worldview intensified when I was hired by Stó:lō Nation in November 1999. I was hired as Education Manager to replace Gwen Point who was on a two-year leave from her position. Part of my new responsibilities would be to oversee the work of the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq'eméylem Language Program. This was a great opportunity for me to be immersed in the topic of my study, to see how people were using the language more broadly and to participate in and observe community activities, some of which are referred to throughout this paper. Being in the community allowed me to become familiar

with a number of individuals who were involved in a broad range of activities in Halq'eméylem language renewal. From these individuals, I selected my co-researchers.

The method of my entire study is truly an heuristic investigation, an internal search for understanding the phenomenon of how learning Halq'eméylem can provide a key to understanding Stó:lō identity and worldview. Heuristic research is

*... a process that begins with a question or problem which the researcher seeks to illuminate or answer. The question is one that has been a personal challenge and puzzlement in the search to understand one's self and the world in which one lives. The heuristic process is autobiographic, yet with virtually every question that matters there is also a social – and perhaps universal – significance...*

*Heuristics is a way of engaging in scientific search through methods and processes aimed at discovery; a way of self-inquiry and dialogue with others aimed at finding the underlying meanings of important human experience.<sup>214</sup>*

In the initial chapters, I draw on my personal experience, on conversations and observations of events in the Stó:lō community and on literature to get at the core of ideas surrounding how identity and worldview are embedded in our Halq'eméylem language.

From September 1998 to July 2000, I delved into researching several topics to set the context for my research. First, I set the socio-historico-politico context, and discovered how to treat as metaphors the concepts of *st'á:em*, “lower-class people,” or “worthless people who do not know their history” and *smelá:lh*, “upper-class people” or “worthy people who know their history.” I use these as metaphors for the effects of Canada's practiced government

assimilation policies, and our efforts to transcend their effects through language and cultural revitalization. To determine what it means “to know our history,” I draw the reader into the land of S’ólh Téméxw, the land of the Stó:lō. Here, I explore Stó:lō people’s worldview defined by our traditional relationship with S’ólh Téméxw, and the interrelatedness of Stó:lō people, language, land and identity. I then examine how Riverworld, or Stó:lō worldview, permeates the Halq’eméylem language, as defined by our ancestors and their relationship to Riverworld. “Singing the Robin’s Song” examines how reconnecting with our Halq’eméylem language is the link that can serve to bring wholeness to understanding our Stó:lō identity and worldview. The inclusion of the co-participants in my investigation aims to depict how our identity and worldview are manifest in a contemporary cultural context through language revitalization.

My research approach was highly influenced by the work of Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis’ method called **The Art and Science of Portraiture** (1997), which seeks to blend art and science to capture the richness, complexity and dimensionality of human experience<sup>215</sup>. In particular, I was drawn by portraiture’s focus on a narrative style and its intention to make the research accessible to a wider audience, and uses a language that is not coded or exclusive.<sup>216</sup> Portraiture concerns itself with supplying rich contextual description, and makes explicit that “voice is the research instrument, echoing the self of the portraitist.”<sup>217</sup> In portraiture,

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<sup>214</sup> Moustakas, pp 17-18

<sup>215</sup> Lawrence-Lightfoot & Hoffman Davis, p. xv.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p 10

<sup>217</sup> Ibid., p. 85



empathy and reciprocity with the co-researchers is central to representing their lives as authentic and legitimate to the participants themselves<sup>218</sup>. Portraiture presents the data in a way in which the participants can proclaim, “This is who we are. This is what we believe. This is how we see ourselves.”<sup>219</sup> An aesthetic whole in portraiture means that the research resonates with the researcher, with the actors and with the audiences, achieving a standard of “authenticity,” portraiture’s response to “validity.”<sup>220</sup> For the research on Stó:lō Halq’eméylem renewal, resonating with the researcher means that I will have written a credible and believable story about my topic; resonance with the co-researchers means that they will see themselves, their images and experiences mirrored in the “poetic monologues,” and in the discussions about them; and resonance for the readers means that they will be able to say, “yes, of course, now I understand better what it means to the Stó:lō people to revive their language!”

I draw on Kenny’s concepts of “humans as aesthetic” to establish the nature of the relationship between myself as researcher and my participants as co-researchers in this study. In “humans as aesthetic,” the assumption is made that “as one moves toward beauty, one moves toward wholeness.” This assumption befits my research of what Halq’eméylem means in the lives of people who are working to revive it to bring wholeness to their lives as Stó:lō people, to reconnect with their Stó:lō aesthetic. I use a creative expression format, *poetic monologues*, to provide a medium for involving the reader in a dynamic of “play.” The “poetic monologues reflect a “transformation into structure” what the co-researchers shared, a creative

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<sup>218</sup> Ibid., pp 148-149

<sup>219</sup> Ibid., p. 193.

<sup>220</sup> Ibid., pp. 245-247.

expression format designed to engage the reader in the lived experiences of the co-researchers. The chapters *Te St'áxcem qas te Smelá:lh*, *S'ólh Téréxcw* and *T'it'elnet te St'ilem te Skw'okw'qá:q* (Singing the Robin's Song) serve as a background setting that contextualizes the shared lived experiences of my co-researchers.

I asked each co-researcher who participated in my study to share the limited time we had together to talk about their life experiences, their thoughts, their dreams, and about their motivation in their work as Halq'eméylem revivalists. I coined the term 'revivalists' only after having interviewed them all. They chose, with a great deal of enthusiasm, to participate in this academic exercise, and I was honoured that they did. The co-researchers chose where we would meet to interview, their home or mine or elsewhere. They were comfortable with me, and spoke freely, with an outpouring of detail I had not expected. I laid out my plan to each of them, explaining as carefully as I could the nature of the phenomenon I was trying to understand. Each person led the way from there with only a little prompting from me with questions from the interview guide (Appendix V), which I posed at intervals, and then receded in the background and listened intently as their voices flowed forth loud and clear. I asked each co-researcher to read and sign two consent forms, one for S.F.U. (Appendix VI) and the one for Stó:lō Nation mentioned earlier. When we finished our talk, I provided each one with a token gift and a small amount of money for their time.

The presentation of the co-researchers' words, isolated from my own interaction with them, lays bare for the reader the essence of what each co-researcher shared. I call them "poetic monologues." Although the "monologues" were derived from our interaction, I call them so

because they reveal, in essence, the co-researchers' own search for understanding the phenomenon they were asked to talk about - their experience. Speaking about their experiences as they did was as much, if not more, for their own sake, as it was for mine. I qualify the monologues with "poetic" because each "monologue" represents a unique character and style that is reflected in the diction and vernacular of each co-researcher. I call them co-researchers because they are deeply involved in learning about themselves and what it means to be Stó:lō by immersing themselves in learning Halq'eméylem. Their experience reflects my experience; my experience reflects theirs. Collectively, we ponder how people are experiencing Halq'eméylem language revival work by examining our individual experiences.

In my presentation of the "poetic monologues," I present my own musings; my own light interpretation of the co-researchers' shared experiences. My musings represent my personal interplay with the "monologues." The reader may establish their own musings, or interplay, with the "monologues" to see what they say, as one might examine a painting in a gallery and determine what the painting says to you, how you understand the painting, how it touches you, interacts with you. The co-researchers' experiences represent a portrayal of their story, complete in itself, in vivid, alive, accurate and meaningful language.<sup>221</sup> In the chapters leading up to the "poetic monologues" I have tried to paint a "Riverworldview picture" of what Halq'eméylem means in a Stó:lō world, in S'ólh Téméxw, a context within which to understand the "monologues." Finally, rather than explaining how history, art, politics, or other human enterprises account for and explain the meanings of my co-researchers'

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<sup>221</sup> Moustakas, p. 19.

experiences, I provide a composite depiction of the experience, representing the entire group of co-researchers.<sup>222</sup>

Each co-researcher received a copy of the audiotaped interview, full transcript and “poetic monologue” with my light interpretation of what they said (Appendix VII). I spoke with Kwósel, Épelel and Tyrone and they requested no changes to what I had written. T’ít’elem Spáth, and Koyàlemót and Katelíla asked for some minor changes and these were incorporated. I visited the elders Yómalot and Siyàmiyatéliyot to show them and explain to them what I had done with the words they shared and incorporated their suggestions for change.

I invite you to come and enjoy the basket of sweet, delicious, and red delectable strawberries to savour and remember. I invite you into the world of Halq’eméylem revivalists to feel and empathize with their cause, their difficulties, their triumphs and joys.

<b>Parents with Children</b>	<b>Junior Elders</b>	<b>Senior Elders</b>
Katelíla Koyalemot Tyrone*	Xwelíxwiya Kwósel T’ít’elem Spá:th *	Épelel Siyàmiyatéliyot Yómalot

The Sto:lō participants fall into three categories equally distributed: Elders, Junior Elders, and Parents with children at home. Of the nine, only two (\*) are male, one Parent and one Junior Elder. There are no living Male elders who are fluent speakers doing active language work. Of the Parents, Katelíla and Koyàlemót teach in an organized setting, while Tyrone is actively

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<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

learning, informally teaching his children, and promotes Halq'eméylem language work in the Stó:lō community. Of the Junior Elders, Kwósel teaches the language at Seabird Island Community School, and T'it'elem Spath teaches the community Halq'eméylem classes to adults. T'it'elem Spath is my brother. Junior Elder, Xwelíxwiya teaches more informally, at every opportunity, to whoever is willing to learn. The Elders' group includes Épelel, Siyàmiyatéliyot and Yómalot. Épelel is the youngest of the three elders and is training to become a highly fluent Halq'eméylem language teacher. Siyàmiyatéliyot is one of the very few fluent Halq'eméylem speakers who also knows how to write Halq'eméylem. Yómalot, the most senior of the three, works diligently to share her vast knowledge of Halq'eméylem. It is important here to acknowledge Ts'ats'elexwót (Elizabeth Herrling), Xwiyólemot (Tillie Gutierrez), and Tseloyóthelwet (Shirley Norris), three other Stó:lō elders who are also making significant contributions to the Halq'eméylem renewal work. It is wonderful, and sends shivers through me, to be writing all these Halq'eméylem names in this paragraph. Halq'eméylem naming is increasingly gaining momentum in Stó:lō communities, giving prominence and validation to this important aspect of our language.

The experiences of this set of co-researchers span the era of community driven Halq'eméylem renewal efforts: the Skulkayn Project of the early '70s, then the Coqualeetza Cultural Education and Training Centre, which also began in the '70s and continues today, and more recently, the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq'eméylem Language Program. Three linguists will be mentioned at various points in the "poetic monologues." They are Jimmy Harris, who conducted work on Halq'eméylem in the 60s, and has been volunteering with Stó:lō Shxwelí in

helping to develop the Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency Program; Brent Galloway, who has been working on the language since 1970 conducting work with the Coqualeetza elders and the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Program; and Strang Burton, who currently works with Stó:lō Shxweli and has taught some of the linguistics courses. Each participant in our study will have had a variety of experiences in any combination of the above-mentioned initiatives. Halq'eméylem language work has also been conducted extensively in community schools in Chehalis and Seabird Island. The Chilliwack School District, where many Stó:lō children attend, has been highly supportive of the Halq'eméylem language work, and is very much looking forward to hiring teachers being produced as a result of all the efforts. Other Halq'eméylem language initiatives have been established in the First Nations communities of Kwantlen, Skwah , Matsqui, Sumas and Chawathil, and possibly others. The Halq'eméylem language renewal momentum is growing. The following table will be useful to the reader in understanding some of the terminology used in the "poetic monologues."

1969	<b>Canada's White Paper Policy.</b> A government document introduced by Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, which proposed to extinguish special rights for Indians. Aboriginal communities across Canada joined forces in opposing the implementation of this policy.
1972-74	<b>Skulkayn Project.</b> This was the earliest community driven project established to document and preserve Halq'eméylem. Elders were audio taped talking about Halq'eméylem language and Stó:lō culture.
1973 – present	<b>Coqualeetza Cultural Education and Training Centre</b> conducted extensive work with Stó:lō elders on Stó:lō history, culture and language. Produced materials to support community language efforts.
1995	<b>Early Skowkale Halq'eméylem Immersion Program.</b> This pre-cursor to the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Program, ambitiously aimed to train teachers with Halq'eméylem fluency in six months. It produced the community language courses: Halq'eméylem Levels I - IV

1995 – present	<b>Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq'eméylem Language Program.</b> Delivers community language programs and trains Halq'eméylem language teachers. Students in this program have taken any combination of Halq'eméylem levels I - IV, the <i>Halq'eméylem Linguistics Proficiency Certificate</i> , the <i>Native Adult Instructors Diploma (NAID)</i> , and the <i>Provincial Instructors Diploma (PID)</i> , and other courses and workshops. Many of the participants now teach Halq'eméylem.
September 2001	<b>Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency Program (IHLFP).</b> Established to help future teachers become <i>highly fluent</i> in Halq'eméylem and to learn how to teach this type of program. It is taught five hours a day, five days a week.
December 2001	<b>Developmental Standard Term Certificate in Halq'eméylem Language and Culture.</b> Incorporates much of the prior work into an accredited teaching certificate recognized by the British Columbia College of Teachers. This certificate was developed with many community stakeholders, Stó:lō and other, in partnership with Simon Fraser University's Faculty of Education.

Co-researchers in this study have referred variably to the above initiatives in our discussions. Stó:lō Shxwelí began its first offering of the Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency Program (IHLFP) in September 2001 to 12 participants. The Stó:lō Nation Developmental Standard Term Certificate (DSTC) in First Nations Language and Culture, in a landmark decision by the British Columbia College of Teachers, was officially approved for delivery on December 6, 2001. Some of the co-researchers in this study will participate in these activities when they are offered. On January 25, 2002, Stó:lō Nation celebrated this historic event in a traditional witnessing ceremony with feasting, drumming, singing and speeches.

And now, I invite you to join me in tasting the red, delectable berries. You will experience the full flavor of them by reading first the “poetic monologues,” and then my musings on what they have said. The “poetic monologues” are presented in the following order:

- Parents with children

- Junior Elders
- Senior Elders

I hope that you will enjoy reading them as much as I did listening to the co-researchers and presenting them in the finest cedar bowl I could carve up.





*Katellá* Catalina Rentaria

Chapter 7

A BASKET OF WILD STRAWBERRIES

*“Signed, ta’ siyáye, your friend.”*

**CATALINA RENTARIA**

November 11, 2000. At the interviewer’s home in Sardis.

You know, my dad grew up as a ‘Brown Monkey,’ called “Brown Monkey” In Bainbridge Bay

He, from the Philippines,  
My mom, from Canada,  
Met in the berry picking fields  
In Bainbridge Bay.

“No *Halq’eréyem*, no Ilocano,”  
They said, for the kids,  
But ~~they~~ used their language,  
A secret language,  
A code,  
Who was sleeping with who?  
“Let’s go get some *sephl*,”  
Some grief relief.

But, I heard the words;  
I knew what *tále* was;  
Knew what *sqóqe* was.  
*Sqóqe* meant  
To get something to drink;  
The *tále* was money.  
And if someone wanted cigarettes,  
I knew what *sp’ól’ens* were.

**Katelíla**

I knew Katelíla from the linguistics classes at *Stó:lō Shxwéł* and from various events in the Stó:lō community. She was always friendly with a good-natured humour, and a little mischievous, which is evident in her monologue. However, Katelíla is very serious and highly dedicated to her role as a *Halq’eréyem* revivalist. Katelíla, with the “gift of gab,” shared generously and from her heart. I did not expect the outpouring of detail and emotion that revealed so much of how the *st’áxem* forces that affected us commonly manifested in her unique life experiences, and how the language work, with all its “brutal teachings,” brought a sense of

<p>Women from many nations, Sumas, Skway, Squiala, Tzeachten, Yakweakwoose, Matsqui, Nooksack, You know, Cheam, Seabird Island, Skowkale, They were down there Picking berries with Filipinos, Some even from Vancouver Island, Nanaimo. They all understood, “I was a berry picker.”</p> <p>They came from Port Douglas Through Harrison Lake Down the River, and then, you know, Chilliwack.</p> <p>They all met in Chilliwack, Intermarrying. And you didn’t want to marry Your cousins; that was taboo.</p> <p>The Japanese came, The Filipinos came To Bainbridge Island. And then in the 60s, We could purchase our own land, To grow the berries, to grow the red gold.</p> <p>Workers would come, Lived in Cabins Indians and Filipinos. They would meet and start dating. You know, we created a subculture Within our own culture.</p> <p>The Filipino mother said “No, she’s Inja-n!” You don’t marry the Inja-n!” The Stó:lō father said, “These men aren’t from here. We don’t know their kind.”</p> <p>The women married Filipinos.</p>	<p><i>smelá:lh</i> back into her life.</p> <p>The <i>st’áxem</i> effect loomed strong in our lives as Aboriginal people in Canada, and doubly so for intermarriages of brown people of different cultures. Katelíla parents’ relationship was born from the fruit of the land, from the “red gold,” from the berry patches. The <i>st’áxem</i> factor served to submerge <i>Halq’eréylen</i> to the role of code among speakers, where secrets were shared, or to conversations in private away from the ears of outsiders. St’áxem forces forbid that <i>Halq’eréylen</i> be transmitted to Katelíla generation, but for a few words she was able to grasp, to use and have fun with. These rare words identified her with others who said, “I was a berry picker,” with the women who came to the “red gold” from all of Coast Salish territory.</p> <p>Intermarriage with outsiders meant women lost their status as Indians, as Band members</p>
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<p>Skway was going downhill; They had 27 in their membership In Skway.</p> <p>Then came Bill C-31, Allowed equality for women. We started coming back Entitled to membership, But not for our children.</p> <p>I've heard you are Who your mother is. So that's what language Meant to me. My mother's from here. Her mother's from here, From Skway, which name I don't like. It means "It's impossible," Or "It's wrong." * The guys that came out here To chart the area, They got it all wrong. It could have meant this, Could have meant that, you know, Same as the Hatzic thing.</p> <p>And what of our language? Our Halq'eméylem language? I just say, "cool." The shame? It's the alcohol thing.</p> <p>My dad would converse with his people, The men would converse, and I'd think, It's just great. They're happy to see each other, Or oh, they're arguing...</p> <p>At school there'd be foreigners. I kind of knew their broken English. Could decipher, oh that'd be Korean, or Those guys are from another place. But there was really no use for it In the education system.</p>	<p>lost their status as Indians, as Band members of Skway, severing from the community ties with the ones responsible for carrying the culture and passing it on to the future generations. The Stó:lō berry picking women, defying Stó:lō fathers, married and left the reserves to live with their Filipino husbands, creating elsewhere a subculture of their own.</p> <p>Katelíla came to understand the term "mother tongue" literally, "I've heard you are who your mother is. That's what language meant to me." This theme is strong in Stó:lō territory where offspring are associated more strongly with their mothers' identity than with their fathers'.</p> <p>[*The anglicized version "Skway" does not represent the Halq'eméylem meaning very well. <i>Shxw'á:y</i>, the Halq'eméylem version means "place for making canoes" from root <i>há:y</i> "making canoes and shxw- (nominalizer for continuatives) here "place for." <i>Skw'á:y</i>, an entirely different word, means "it's impossible, it's wrong" (Galloway, 2002, p.c.)]</p>
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They had to learn English to get along  
In today's society.  
I associated our language as  
Something I didn't need to know.

Mom looked at her husband  
Talking with his friends in Ilocano,  
And all of a sudden  
A big roar of laughter.  
She probably thought,  
"Oh, my God, their talking about me."  
She'd get with her friends,  
And they had their language.  
It was kind of neat for me.

I went to the white school,  
And went to the powwow.  
Didn't understand their singing,  
It sounded like gibberish.  
I know my mom speaks  
Some kind of language,  
And how come we didn't have  
Songs that are shared?

I enrolled in some class,  
Was going through a divorce,  
Had three kids to look after, and you know,  
A single mom, trying to get over it.  
I wanted to kill myself,  
And all that stuff.  
I didn't want to sit home.  
I was always a worker,  
Worked in the fields, and  
Went up to Alaska to the fish canneries.  
When I met my husband, I was only 16.  
He put me through school,  
Through graphic arts.  
I did that for 10 years

My marriage broke up,  
Now what do I do?  
Mom had a house up here in Skway,  
Her connections were

Through Bill C-31 legislation, the women  
returning to Skway began increasing Skway's  
population from its prior depleted state, and  
Katelíla, one of the cultural carriers, has  
welcomed her role, her burden of  
responsibility, for reviving *Halq'éréyem*. She  
understands the value of being at home with  
one's "mother tongue," as she observed her  
dad speaking with his people and heard her  
mom bantering comfortably, and sometimes  
humorously, in code *Halq'éréyem* with her  
friends. Though each parent wondered and  
was skeptical about what the other was  
saying, there was fun in it all, many fond  
memories that Katelíla cherishes.  
Outside the comforts of home, things were  
different. Katelíla came to learn that in the  
education system there was no place for a  
language like *Halq'éréyem*, or any other non-  
Anglo language for that matter. The message  
was loud and clear, "Something I didn't need  
to know," and in good *st'áxem* effect fashion,

Deep rooted in the land.  
That was her life work,  
25 years of picking berries.  
She stayed home with us, or would work,  
Fish processing, you know, and I did too.  
I came up in the summer, and  
Packed fish from the river  
With my uncles, and  
The boys would go fish.  
The women stayed home,  
And you know,  
Washing the canning jars,  
Canning fish for the summer.

We'd make extra money, and  
Run from the fish wardens, cause  
If the nose and the dorsal fin wasn't cut,  
They would cease your car,  
Cease your fish, cause that's how  
Indians had to mark the fish.  
You know, we got money doing that.  
All you'd needed, was  
Gas for the motor, gas for the car,  
Some smokes and some beer.  
We'd stay up four/five days and nights  
To do what you gotta do  
To go fishin.

Anyway, here I was, on social assistance,  
And what do I do?  
Where's work around here?  
I came over here, no funding down there.  
Why don't you go to school? They said.  
I said, great, and started going to school.

And that's where I met Tess and Diane.  
They started with greetings,  
Doing the listen and repeat thing,  
Rote learning, and I said,  
"Wow! That's so cool." And so  
Professionally done, in our language.  
Hearing it, and everybody speaking it,  
I just got a rush, and wanted everybody

to know," and in good *st'á'em* effect fashion,  
Katelíla would not have access to learning it.  
And what of our own language and songs?  
She wondered, realizing that our language  
wasn't there, in the education system, or  
anywhere. And the pow-wow songs and  
dances didn't quite convince her that that was  
who she was either.

Life went on. Katelíla met her husband-to-be  
at the tender age of 16 and had three kids. All  
this would change after 10 years when they  
divorced. It was a sad time, and a turning  
point in Katelíla's life. This new situation  
brought her back home to Skway, to her  
fondest memories of River ways, of canning,  
fishing, wardens, to the land of berry picking  
women, to the land of her mother.

Once home, and restless, Katelíla returned to  
continue her education, and there  
encountered *Halq'enyélem* once again in a  
setting different from her childhood days, in

<p>To start learning it, to have that feeling That sparked my identity.</p> <p>I thought, “Oh, my God.” The people were hurt up here, Especially economically; But the spirit lived here. Where were these ladies When I was in pre-school? I had a good education; Don’t get me wrong. Coming back these years later, And seeing the nursery songs sung To the kids down the Landing, and I think Coqualeetza, Pita and Malila Were teaching down here. I said, “How cool! Finally, Educating for a purpose,” and you know, I was like, “Wow!” I connected, And then I just couldn’t stop from there. It was strange.</p> <p>So, then, after I took just that small Little course, I said, “Thank you, finally.” I was just so jazzed about it. My brother was chief and he said, “Well, You’re gointa have to learn the language. You go see the elders and talk with the Elders as much as you can.” I wasn’t able to talk to my grandmother Because of the politics, and the in-fighting.</p> <p>Then I took level one, And taking courses at UCFV, And they were doing the NAID program And we could get it for credit. I started calling around. I picked up the phone. They didn’t have any system back then. We basically had to teach ourselves. Nobody ever designed a program For language.</p>	<p>setting different from her childhood days, in an artificial environment, a classroom.</p> <p>“Wow! That’s so cool!” Her initial reaction was affective, strong with positive feeling, as happens with so many of our people upon experiencing more intense exposure to our language, connecting us with who we are as <i>Stó:lō</i>. I call this happening the <i>smé:lá:lh</i> effect, becoming worthy, or realizing the worthiness of who we are as <i>Stó:lō</i>, in this case, through our language. The <i>smé:lá:lh</i> effect sometimes overcomes us, as in Katelíla’s case, so strongly, it seems strange, but wonderfully so.</p> <p>Once hooked on the language, Katelíla realizes the responsibility, the expectations required of her in her new role in the community. Along with the warm fuzzies, the “jazziness,” come the challenges and hardships of the factions, the politicking and in fighting in the community, being careful not to breach cultural protocol. The</p>
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And then there was in-fighting with  
Coqualeetza and Stó:lō Nation.  
I just said well, you know, let's be pioneers  
To language accreditation.  
I really didn't want to start with a fight.  
It felt weird going in there,  
Getting involved with the elders' disputes,  
And you know, this isn't fruitful for me.

There was one time when  
We wanted to sing that silent night song.  
We put a First Nations twist to the song.  
So instead of the three wise men, we'll use  
The four grandmothers who bring  
Gifts for the King, to the baby Jesus.  
One from the root people,  
One from the winged,  
One from the four legged and  
One from the water.  
We choreographed it along with the song.  
We wanted to do it  
At the elders' Christmas dinner.  
And they made us wait  
For like four hours there,  
And they were doing their raffles,  
Everybody was leaving,  
They knew we were there...

And so, that was like level III,  
And we did The NAID and the PID,  
Some practicums, and did some linguistics.  
So, I said let's go get the elders, and  
I'd make them some food and  
Bring them whatever they needed,  
And sit down and talk to them all day,  
Having fun learning,  
Deflecting the politics,  
Not even worrying about the funding.

And then Strang came out, and we didn't  
Really know how to sign up for college.  
Some of us didn't complete  
High school. Strang said,

challenges often brought personal pain. The  
"pioneers to language accreditation," as  
Katelila referred to herself and her peers,  
trudged on; getting passed the hurdles, the  
hurts. Sometimes it seemed as if nobody  
cared for the language, after all the "pioneers"  
were doing, investing so much of their time,  
their energy, their hearts in working to learn  
*Halq'enyem* to revive it. They found solace  
with the fluent elders who worked with *Stó:lō*  
*Shxweli*, taking care of them, having fun,  
"deflecting the politics."

The natural place for language transmission is  
in the home from parent to child, extending  
from there. But now, it is transmitted in  
classrooms, on computers, used informally as  
a code language, and eventually reverberates  
back to the home. The transmission is  
flowing backwards now with language being  
learned in a formal classroom setting before  
being passed on to the children in the home.



<p>You can get on with mature student status.  We checked the box.  Had to be Twenty-six,  Or something like that.  We started with twenty.  Ended up with eight.</p> <p>We went to Snunéymexw,  And they said it again.  It's not dead.  Our language is alive.  We've got resources,  We got technology, email.  So, why can't we use those  On-line?</p> <p>If you don't want somebody  To know what you are talking about,  Those are your opportunities  To use Halq'eméylem.  Or you can insult somebody,  Not to hurt somebody's feelings.  I could use it to just say  Talk about money, about time.  I talk to my mom, my co-workers.  Slowly trying to bring  The language back to Nooksack.  I just say, "Láw" And they respond.</p> <p>I'd call up my mom and she'd speak  Halq'eméylem, and my dad  Would get kinda angry about it.  She lit a candle or some little ritual.  Dad didn't like it,  So, he blew out the candle.  Then Mom goes, "Your Dad's a real devil  [in Halq'eméylem]."  "WHAT? Are you guys talking  #@% Halq'eméylem?"  Mom and I would  Just burst out laughing.</p> <p>Any time I get able to do that, to laugh or</p>	<p>Katelíla is doing her share to bring the  language back to her Nooksack roots, to her  co-workers there, and to "the Nooksack boys  and girls." Their positive reception to her  teaching invokes strong emotions, "I just cry  because I was just so happy to see that many  kids interested." Katelíla sees the <i>smelá:lh</i>  effect resulting from her efforts. Out of the  classroom and into her home, Katelíla teaches  her children. A natural setting for teaching  the ways of the <i>Stó:lō</i>, scolding and singing,  praying and lecturing, everyday things in  <i>Halq'eméylem</i>, reversing the artificiality of  classroom learning.</p> <p>For the "pioneers" who've learned so much,  there just isn't enough exposure to hearing  the language to learn its rhythms, too few  opportunities to expand their knowledge and  to practice what they know. Also, modern  technology is presenting both a boon and a  bane for <i>Stó:lō</i> people. <i>Halq'eméylem</i> is being</p>
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<p>Say something in Halq'eméylem, I'll use any opportunity. Or you can use your Hotmail; I use my Translated version of Catalina, Katelíla. So everyday I check my hotmail, I'm doing Halq'eméylem, Signed <i>ta' si:ɣɣe</i>, your friend.</p> <p>I got asked to go down and teach The Nooksack boys and girls. It's voluntary. My tuition is Students teach it to someone else, Or teach each other what I taught them. It works out good. So, I just said, can you say your name? And who are your parents? And why you Came down and want Halq'eméylem? So we did that, and I just cry because I was so happy to see That many kids interested. They wanted it, Just to be able to learn it and share it With the elders, And sing "silent night" for them. And you know, It was really fun.</p> <p>I teach my own kids. Sometimes they're not good. I mean like I scold them. "<i>Enéllxa!</i> <i>Ené!</i>" I would tell them, "Sit down!" They picked up the "thank you song" Really quick. They did sing it last May When they opened the new wing To McCammon School. So, they knew the "thank you song," And they picked that up quick. They Picked up the "<i>Ey tel Sqwálexwel st'ílem,</i>" And the "Salish Anthem." I would sing in the car And play tapes over and over. We'd bless the food at the table And I'd lecture them;</p>	<p>digitized, on CDs now, yet computers are scarce, "and yeah, what's the financing on that?" And how many languages does it take to learn <i>Halq'eméylem</i>? It's a complex affair, what with the orthographies and fonts, the IPA, English and techno-babble. "It's awesome what were able to do." Katelíla and her peers acquired a great deal of knowledge in relation to their <i>Halq'eméylem</i> learning and are rightly proud of their hard earned knowledge.</p> <p>The <i>Stó:ló</i> believe that the language is inherent to who we are, something inside of us, a mystery that "the Great <i>Chícheh Siyá:m</i> put in my heart." According to Katelíla, <i>Halq'eméylish</i> is the way to go, meshing two languages to create a new one, but a living one, making it our own, "making its meaning for you." The more Katelíla becomes immersed in learning about <i>Halq'eméylem</i>, the more she becomes delighted in understanding</p>
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<p>What to do for the day, And what didn't get done.</p> <p>A lot of people are real Protective of the language. Some of the teachings are held so sacred Because we gotta hold on To what's real Spiritual. You can't be running the camera When you're doing the burning, Doing spiritual work like that.</p> <p>We need more stories. We need fluent <i>Halq'eméylem</i> To get the rhythm of the language. I don't hear it enough. The visual aids we have Don't stimulate learning for me any more. You know, I don't have A freakin' computer, And yeah, what's the financing on that?</p> <p>Can Halq'eméylem become A functional living language again? What do you mean become? It is. We are livin' it. We're livin' it right now. It's functional for our purposes. But, you know, I don't think That we'll ever become fluent. And actually, When you're on the computer, on-line, You're like doing Five languages at once. You got the regular type boarding, Then the clicking sounds, That's the computer language. Plus you're doing an Americanist Orthography, that's your second language, Plus you're doing Halq'eméylem. You're doing English, And then you're doing IPA at one time. So, yeah, it's functional.</p>	<p>the intricacies of it, amazed at the skill the elders possess in being able to dissect it, revealing deeper meanings of the words in our language. Becoming <i>smelá:lh</i>, becoming aware of what <i>Chíxwelh Síyá:m</i> gave, makes one realize the impact of the <i>st'áxem</i> effect, of not being positively represented in the larger society. Becoming <i>smelá:lh</i> is the vantage point from which to counteract the <i>st'áxem</i> stereotypes and to recognize and honour our own representations of ourselves, "our own language... songs... dance... foods... government system."</p> <p>What are the rewards? Not material, but intangible, feelings, light overshadowing the dark stereotypes we've lived with for so long. "It's just so awesome." However, the honour is also a burden of responsibility, daunting, and with practical considerations attached to it, "How are you gonna feed yourself?" And the brutal teachings that come with the</p>
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<p>It's awesome what we're able to do.</p> <p>I think what we'll have is Halq'eméylish.  We gotta know English, but then  Also gotta keep up with culture.  We're going to have to mesh a language,  To create a new language,  A living language.  It's not gone.  You draw upon both cultures  And make it your meaning for you.</p> <p>The heart of my culture is the language.  It's my identity,  Who I am.  There's something inside of there  That the Great Siyá:m, the Chíchelh Siyá:m  Put in my heart,  And nobody can take that from me.  That's just the way it is.  There's some connection there,  And I don't know what it is.</p> <p>I took Spanish in high school, and  Hey, what about our language?  This is our land here, and you know,  We're not this typical stereotype drunk  Indian passed out on Pioneer Square,  Or in Vancouver on the street.  We're our own distinct people.  We have our own language,  Our own songs,  Our own dance,  Our own foods we eat,  Our own government system.  It's something that's drawn to you  About who you are,  About how I feel about myself.</p> <p>And you're seeing a lot of Nations  Finally standing up  And recognizing their language,  Recognizing their culture;</p>	<p>territory, "where your tongue has the power  to pick somebody up and knock somebody  down really bad." The pain, the growth, the  realization that some of the brutal teachings  come from love, "I learned that she loved me  enough," says Katelíla about her  grandmother's critical words. She realizes  that not getting through the brutal teachings  means, "They win," the <i>st'á'em</i> forces prevail  and we become "dispossessed" of who we  are.</p> <p>Despite the many difficult challenges, there  are no doubts in Katelíla's mind of the  functionality of our language in the world of  today, "We're livin' it right now." Katelíla  doubts that "we'll ever become fluent," but is  sure that the language will live, that we need  to "just wake it up." Finally, her comment,  "It is so freeing" sums up our purpose for  learning <i>Halq'erréylen</i>, freeing us from the  forces of <i>st'á'em</i> to return to our sense of</p>
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<p>I am in awe.</p> <p>I sit with my mom and read to her,  <i>"Imétsa"</i> and say, "Mom, that's first  Person," then add the pronoun, you know,  <i>Imé dhexw, Imé chap,</i> and then "yeah, that's  Right," that's the second person plural.  Even Yómalot will say,  "Well this part of the word means this,  This is built into that,"  And it's just amazing how they thought  In what do you call that, word economy?  And she never went to college.</p> <p>Rewards? I don't know,  There are so many.  The feelings in my heart,  Being able to share the intangible stuff.  Those are the biggest rewards,  Those spirit feelings.  It's just so awesome,  How far we've grown,  That we're not the epitome of  The drunken Indian on the street.  We're in the academic world,  Front lining it, you know.  We're livin it.  It's not monetary, but it's  Those really nice feelings.</p> <p>The greatest challenge is funding.  It's important to have the economic part  Because how are you gonna feed yourself  In our society that we live in?  But, if you're feeling good  About yourself,  Then your family's going  To be taken care of  Emotionally.  Cause language is like  A double edged sword  Where your tongue has the power  To pick somebody up and</p>	<p><i>smelá:lh.</i></p>
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Knock somebody down really bad,  
Those are some of the challenges.

We have a big responsibility.  
You know, you were there  
At that grad ceremony.  
It was an honor, but then  
It's also a burden, a burden  
To carry it on into the future.  
I don't think it's really that bad.  
We already got it;  
All we have to do  
Is just wake it up.  
That's what I'm saying,  
It's there,  
We're just reviving it.

My philosophy is that I am not  
The all-knowing teacher.  
I am a learner and student at the same time.  
Those kids are picking up  
A way lot more than I am.  
Their brain is moving a hundred times  
Faster than mine.  
And she's teaching me something.  
The same way too,  
I could teach her,  
And she could be the learner.  
It could go either way;  
We're both at one time.  
So, I know that those kids  
Are listening somehow.  
And I like it too.

I was hurt at first, and  
Seen other people cry.  
And I've heard "you're not saying it right,"  
My grandmother told me, "You don't  
Really know what you're saying."  
I just felt so bad about that.  
I would call my own grand-aunty,  
You know, and I said, "What a freakin'  
Bitch, what has she done?"

Then, I say, okay,  
Let me take this negative situation  
And turn it around.  
You know what it was?  
It was one of those brutal teachings.  
She was an elder,  
Defending the language.  
So that gave me a teaching  
To fight for who I am.  
Because the *Xuelitem*,  
Whatever they want,  
If we lose our language,  
They've succeeded in their quest  
To destroy us,  
Dispossess us of language,  
Dispossess us of land.  
They win.  
We'd pick it up as a teaching  
To humble yourself,  
And to also fight too.  
Who else is going to waste their time  
To talk to you like this?  
"It's because I love you."  
And I learned that she loved me enough.  
That's a really hard teaching.  
It makes you feel sad,  
But you swallow your pride.  
She loved me that much to say that to me;  
Even though it hurt,  
And it still does.

Never say that it's extinct.  
You are there, when you are  
In your grandmothers  
How many generations ago?  
You heard the language.  
It was in her womb,  
In your mother's womb,  
Now in you.  
Never say extinction  
Cause this is living.  
And don't think that it is ever gone.  
You are still alive,

And it's up to you to pick up the ball And just wake it up. It is so freeing.	
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*Koyàlemót* Mary Stewart

**“Teach the Children With Love”**

**MARY STEWART**

November 13, 2000. At the interviewer’s home in Sardis.

Law, *Koyàlerrít tel skwáx*.  
*Xwáhréxwáth skwáx* is *Koyàlerrít*,  
 My traditional name.  
 It’s my great grandfather, Harry Stewart’s.  
 I’m from Skwah Reserve.

His name’s Koyàl; it means Peacemaker. \*  
 He was a leader of five reserves;  
 The people gave him that name.  
 He was called to different reserves  
 To settle disputes.

I have three girls.  
 Youngest one’s Jenna, she’s four;  
 She’s been around the language the most,  
 Since ’94. And then Alita, she’s nine,  
 And Rozaline is going to be nine  
 In February.  
 I’m with Bill Sepass,  
 Living on Skowkale.

I was honoured recently.  
 That really surprised me.  
 They covered me with a *swáqwéth*,  
 A wool blanket. I guess  
 They were happy with my achievements  
 In the language. I have to learn how  
 To look after it, to store it.  
 I will go meet with the man  
 Who made the *swáqwéth* some day, and  
 Ask him what these symbols mean  
 On the blanket.

**Koyàlemót**

Koyàlemót and I met for our talk at my home. I knew Koyàlemót from linguistics classes at *Stó:lō Shxwáth*, and she taught some of *Stó:lō Shxwáth*’s *Halq’emýlen* language courses at the Coqualeetza grounds.

Koyàlemót strikes me as a gentle spirit, quiet, but well spoken, strong in her convictions, and well immersed in *Stó:lō* cultural practices.

Before our talk, she said a prayer for the work that we were about to do. She exuded reverence for the language work, for *Stó:lō* tradition, practices and beliefs. I felt humble in her gesture.

What’s in a name? Koyàlemót explains the meaning of her name, where it came from. *Halq’emýlen* names are important, distinguish us as *Stó:lō* people in a larger world where *Stó:lō* is something of a mystery.

When he made the blanket,  
 He said lots of prayers.  
 He said whenever I feel down,  
 I need strength, or whatever projects  
 I might be involved with, he said,  
 I could just wrap that blanket around me;  
 It'll give me strength.

I first became aware of the language,  
 About early 90s. I'm forty-two now.  
 When I was growing up  
 In Kwantlen reserve,  
 The majority of the elders  
 Were gone at that time.  
 We didn't have much cultural teachings.  
 I went to the public school, and there were  
 Only two or three Native families  
 In the Kwantlen school system.  
 We were the minority there.  
 All my friends were non-Natives  
 And would say,  
 "Do you know your language?"  
 I'd go, "No, I don't know."  
 I'd kind of feel bad.  
 Didn't understand  
 Why I didn't know my language.

I was raised by my grandparents  
 Who passed away in the early sixties;  
 I remember them;  
 They would speak Halq'eméylem,  
 And would always be joking.  
 Didn't know what they were saying,  
 But I remember the few words  
 They would tell us.  
 To be scared would be *sí:si*.  
 I learned that somehow.  
 We used to tease each other as kids.

My grandmother and grandfather  
 Would call me *Máli*;  
 Halq'eméylem word for Mary.  
 All these years growing up

*Stó:ló* is something of a mystery.

[ \* Regarding the name *Koyále*, Galloway (2002, p.c.) states that the root may be *kyá*, "wait" as in *kyálám*, "fast for lent," and *kyat*, "wait, be later." The "t" there is purposeful control. In *kyu-lám*, the "l" means "manage to, despite obstacles." The "á:" is durative and the -em (middle voice) means "do to oneself." ]

Next, *Koyálemót* introduces her family and community of residence. When I think about how language is learned naturally, I think of family, and how it takes a family to learn a language. The Maori people capitalized on that idea in their Te Kohanga Reo language nests.

When *Koyálemót* shared how her community honoured her for the language work she is doing, their gesture reminds me that it takes a community to raise a whole human being. Their gesture brings honour to the language, to the language work and to those involved in the language. It holds our *Halq'eméylem* language high, and sends a message to the

<p>I didn't understand why They called me Málí; Until I joined the language in '94. One of the instructors was telling us What Málí meant... Either for Mary or Merry (Xmas). So, I didn't find out the meaning Until I was in my mid 30's...</p> <p>The way I was raised was, I call myself an urban Indian, Even though I lived on the reserve. Didn't have elders to pass on the teachings. We just knew we were Indians, you know. That would bother me, Because my friends would say, "Well, do you know your language?" And I'd, well, "I don't know it," Didn't really understand Why it wasn't passed down. And to think, their parents would say, "Oh you're just too lazy. Don't want to learn your language. Just lazy, right?" So, that would hurt. Seemed like I was always asked Throughout my whole life by non-Natives. "Do you know your language?"</p> <p>Yeah, and I didn't ever hear it until I moved to Chilliwack in the mid-80s. They were offering Halq'eméylem At the Fraser Valley College, Through Coqualeetza. Sounded interesting, so I went. There was about 10 of us students. We had lots of fun. I liked it, Though the sounds were difficult to say. Don't know why, but I guess We were so busy with our studies, we Didn't have time to continue. They quit having it there. We felt good anyway, that someone</p>	<p>community at large that <i>Halq'eméylem</i> is important to <i>Stó:lō</i> people, to the people of Skwah.</p> <p>The honour is solidified with the symbol of the <i>Swōqw'elh</i>, the wool blanket, and means Koyàlemót now shoulders responsibility for the language, and further that her blanket of responsibility will give her strength. Koyàlemót demonstrates tremendous strength throughout her story here.</p> <p>Early memories of the <i>st'áxen</i> effect for Koyàlemót recall confusion over identity and language. Why did we not have our language? Why did everyone expect us to have our language? And why was shame attached to not knowing it? For Koyàlemót, confusion stemmed from not understanding what happened to the language in her community. However, she remembers hearing the language being spoken by her grandparents, and remembers a few words that she learned,</p>
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<p>Was willing to give us the time, To teach us the language.</p> <p>When I was living in Kwantlen, Coqualeetza offered To teach Halq'eméylem. Someone made the decision, "Oh no, we don't need it here." Some of us were thinking That would have been really fun. The views at that time was "It'll just, make you backward." They went to the residential schools, And were saying, "It's not good, Not going to help with your life."</p> <p>I try to speak it all the time At home with my children. My kids now, they say, "Éy látelh, good morning." When they go to bed, they say, "Éy slát," "Good night." "Tí:lsthóme, [I love you.]"</p> <p>My kids are really proud of me. When I start doing my practicums With Stó:lō Shxwelí, telling them I'm going to these schools, I'll be teaching Halq'eméylem. They say, "Oh, my mom's a teacher, A Halq'eméylem teacher." One of my daughters, in grade four Last year, was learning Stó:lō culture and people. The teacher asked me Would I be interested in going Just to talk about the language. I said, "Oh, sure." My daughter Rozaline goes, "Oh, mom, I don't know." She was kind of being bashful about it, Don't know why. So, I told her It would be really good for me to do that.</p>	<p>and remembers a few words that she learned, such as <i>sísi</i> and <i>Málh</i>, which she came to discover, was her own name, Mary. This memory of <i>Halq'eméylem</i> would come to serve her in a time of becoming <i>smelá:lh</i>, a time of learning what happened and redressing the gap in her knowledge of the language, of what it means to be Stó:lō.</p> <p>Relationships with outsiders in Koyàlemót's younger days were brutal. Outsiders understood little of our history, of what happened to us, or otherwise how could they be so insensitive? The question "Do you know your language?" though it may have been an innocent question, was like pouring salt to an already raw wound. The <i>st'áxem</i> effect was strong during Koyàlemót's youth, at a time when she understood little of why it was that way.</p> <p>The <i>st'áxem</i> effect was evident in the attitudes toward the language in the not so distant past,</p>
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<p>She thought about it and said,  “Mom, when you go to my school,  You have to be dressed up nice.”  She was excited about it.</p> <p>I’m working with Xolhméylh,  In the Head Start program.  Halq’eméylem Is one of  The six components we cover.  It includes parents and the children,  Ages infancy to six.  It’s a parent-involved program.</p> <p>When I got hired,  I was only looking for part-time work.  I put my resume in. They got back to me,  “Well, we want you full-time,”  They knew I had the language  And a social service background.  I told them, “Give me a week..”  My elders were saying  Our paths are made for us, and  We have to follow that path.  Well, this is the path -  Doors opening for me to work  And teach Halq’eméylem.</p> <p>There was no curriculum developed,  So, I’m developing curriculum, and  Trying to decide what’s best  For the children and the parents.  Our program is so new;  Language revival so new.  Children pick it up fast.  I find songs they can pick up.  The nursery rhymes through Stó:lō Shxweli  Are a high level of Halq’eméylem.  I have to figure out how  To make it real simple  For the kids and the parents.  We just purchased language masters.  They love the whole idea of  Hearing your own voice. We</p>	<p>toward the language in the not so distant past,  prevalent even while the Coqualeetza  Education Training Centre was reaching out  to bring <i>Halq’eméylem</i> to Koyàlemót’s  community, in Kwantlen. The views at the  time, “It’s not going to help you with your  life.”</p> <p>Today is a different story. <i>Halq’eméylem</i>  prevails in Koyàlemót’s home, “Éy lí:telh,”  “Éy slát” “Tl’í:lsònz,” are common fare with  her children now. And the children are proud  of their <i>Halq’eméylem</i> teacher mom, though  they may feel a little bashful about it in a  public forum such as school - residue of  <i>st’á:em</i> in the world of today.</p> <p>What is remarkable about Koyàlemót is how  far her reach extends with the modest amount  of <i>Halq’eméylem</i> she knows. Following the  advice of elders, Koyàlemót chose to work in  a role where she is able to utilize both her  language and social service background</p>
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<p>Don't have a computer for our program.          We're using flip charts, songs, prayers;          We do grace before meals.          Some of the parents are trying to learn it;          I try to encourage them, empower them          To learn the language.</p> <p>My goal is to share the language.          It's going to be slow;          I have three hours with the parents, and          One hour is for lunch.          I speak Halq'eméylem, say          "Thank you," "you're welcome,"          And just general greetings.          One of the parents,          She's into the language.          Her little girl is one, and she's learning          "Hello" and "Thank you."          Her mom really helps;          They speak it at home,          Whatever they learn.</p> <p>At our staff meetings at Xolhméylh,          They've asked me to have          15 minute of Halq'eméylem          Before meetings starts.          Done that a few times.</p> <p>I just got asked to work          With the resource workers,          To do prayer, and Halq'eméylem lessons.          That seemed to come along after I got          The linguistics certificate.</p> <p>When I pray on my own,          It's in Halq'eméylem.          A few of my student friends,          We call each other, and try to say          As much as we can in Halq'eméylem.</p> <p>I've been in the language since '94;          Had a few breaks in between,          And the summer off.</p>	<p>language and social service background          teaching children and parents. Through her          teaching, parents in the Head Start program          can bring their Halq'eméylem learning home          to practice with their children.</p> <p>At work, Koyàlemót teaches <i>Halq'eréylem</i> to          her co-workers, and attained experience in          teaching the language on a contractual basis          with the Stó:lō Shxwélí Language until she          attained permanent employment at          Xolhméylh. Outside of work, she shares with          her family at home and with her <i>Halq'eréylem</i>          teaching friends. The teaching is done with          little or no curriculum and learning resources.</p> <p>In private, Koyàlemót prays in <i>Halq'eréylem</i>,          keeps up with the language, reading, using it,          learning on her own steam, her own          motivation. But it's not enough. The          challenge of time competes with her own          growth in Halq'eméylem learning, competing          with the challenges of raising children whose</p>
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I always kept up with the language,  
Keep reading, using it.  
I learn more than they're offering;  
It's just my own motivation.

It's hard to find time.  
My children are getting a bit older, and  
Need more of my time  
To help with their homework.  
Less time for myself.  
I usually start studying at  
9 o'clock at night,  
Then I'm tired;  
I try to do things for myself.

At each level, I thought maybe  
This way might be better,  
Or maybe that way,  
The program might be better.  
As long as I was learning, and  
Can go home and say I  
Learned five words today,  
That satisfied me.

I sometimes felt like walking away.  
The education department  
Promised jobs from the beginning.  
We keep going, learning the language  
And waiting for jobs.  
I thought it really disheartening;  
Felt we were betrayed in that way.  
But was glad to be learning,  
And could teach my children.

It's the elders that kept me  
From walking away.  
They've been involved in the language  
A long time, and they don't give up  
On saving the language.  
They have so much patience;  
We get so frustrated,  
And they stayed there with us.  
The elders told us,

with the challenges of raising children whose  
time demands grow with the years, their  
homework and so on. And the effect of all  
the demands, "Sometimes I felt like walking  
away from the language." Why? Maybe the  
program could have been better; maybe  
someone could have acknowledged the worth  
for all that the *Halq'eréyem* teachers were  
putting themselves through. Where were the  
jobs that were promised? The consolation  
for Koyàlemót, "was glad to be learning, and  
could teach my children."

But when the going gets tough, Koyàlemót, in  
the end, cannot walk, cannot walk away from  
the elders. They are her inspiration, and she  
realises that their time with us may be very  
short, leaving her and the others to carry on  
the work to revive the language. Koyàlemót  
and the others will be the experts in Upriver

*Halq'eréyem*



<p>When they go to the other side,  They don't have to worry  About the language, because  The students are going to carry it on.  Oh, my gosh, them talking like that; it hurt.  I don't think I can walk  Away from the elders.</p> <p>I really wanted the language;  Had to find a way.  Then Stó:lō Nation  Had this first project going.  I had to make a choice,  Means I can't have a job.  I was on a job contract, and thought,  No, this is important to me.  I became a student; it was confirmed.  And people would say,  You guys are getting paid  A thousand dollars a month,  Thinking that was a lot of money.  For me it was a sacrifice  To go to school. I had to use  My children's family allowance  To pay for the babysitting;  They sacrificed too.  Bill was working,  And it was hard to live on one income.  It hurt when they said that.</p> <p>At that time, level one was six months,  Four hours a day, five days a week.  We had a lot of language.  I feel we got cheated;  We had to go for so long.  Now, level ones, they go one semester, and  Got equal value to us.  They have level one; I have level one,  But it's not the same.</p> <p>When I was in level one,  We had input from the elders.  They would come in and speak to us</p>	<p>Koyàlemót made a personal choice to be one  of the few to be selected to carry the burden  of <i>Halq'éréylem</i> language revival. The  sacrifices she and her family made were not  small, and were at times met with scorn by  some of the community members, "You guys  are getting paid a thousand dollars a month."  It being no small task and thankless at times,  one might wonder what the others were  fussing was about. But for people in a First  Nations community with high unemployment  and low levels of education, a thousand  dollars could seem like a lot of money.</p> <p>Koyàlemót's challenges would become  greater the more immersed in the language  work she became. It would seem that one  would need to develop a really thick skin.  Sometimes things just didn't seem fair, in  terms of what Koyàlemót had to do to learn  the language and what's expected now.  "They have level one; I have level one, but it's</p>
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<p>About the importance of learning.  This is how we should carry ourselves  If we want to be teachers.  They were strict. They said,  You can't be going out  Every weekend getting drunk,  Making a scene of yourself.  You have to be a role model,  Representing Stó:lō people,  Carry yourself right.  It was hard to sit there and listen to that.  If the students showed  Disrespect to the teachers,  The elders would give us a lecture;  It was good.</p> <p>Now I've taught a few courses, and  Thought the students didn't respect me.  They told me what they thought about me;  Didn't value what I knew.  I was being challenged;  I didn't like that, and  Didn't know how to handle it.  What I find missing now in levels I-IV;  We need our elders.</p> <p>Our people are healing,  Healing through so much.  The people that were challenging me,  Or being disrespectful,  Must have a lot of healing to do.  I did feel like quitting too, teaching.  Thought, well this is too much.  I put a lot into the language,  Many years of studying,  And the students don't even respect me.  Don't know if I can handle this.  But, my elders told me,  When you start something,  You gotta finish.  I got through the semester.</p> <p>Strang said, just teach three semesters,</p>	<p>not the same.” The feeling is that standards  have changed and the intensive rigors and  learning from the earlier program are not  recognized. And further, now that  Koyàlemót is a teacher, she doesn't have the  luxury of having an elder present to set things  right with the students, to teach them about  respect. Koyàlemót is now required to play  that role for herself, an elder-in-training? I  venture to say, most certainly.</p> <p>Koyàlemót reconciles the challenges and  hurts she experiences, chalking it up to a  people who are “healing through so much.”  She finds ways to overcome her personal  obstacles through solace with whoever is  around her who can relate, and through her  own personal ingenuity and charm in her  classroom practice. This is evident in her  student's response to her approach, ““Okay,  so we gotta have rules,” and that set the pace.’</p>
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<p>And you'll understand          What students are all about;          You'll know how to handle them.          My second semester I went in, and          We developed rules as a group,          Rules for this classroom,          How are we going to treat each other          As teacher and students?          I told them my experience          With my first class. They were laughing, And          said, "Okay, so we gotta have rules."          And that set the pace.</p> <p>This last year, I was getting ready          For my mid-term exam with          Brent Galloway, he has pretty hard tests.          I was really tired,          And the only time I can study is in the          Evening. I got the kids to bed, and          Thought, oh I'll wait another day,          I was tired. Then my daughter, she says,          "<i>Ey slat! Tl'lsòrɛ</i> [Good night. I love you.]          It was just what I needed to hear.          She said, "Good night, I love you,"          And gave me a hug.          That gave me strength and energy,          Gave me more motivation.          I opened my books,          And started my Halq'eméylem.</p> <p>I don't know if I'm doing right          Not speaking English to my youngest.          I started speaking Halq'eméylem first,          Then I'll say it in English.          My babysitter next door, she'd say,          I don't know what she's saying          Cause she's speaking Halq'eméylem.          Does she want juice, or whatever?          When I pick her up,          I would have to tell her what she's saying.          So, she's teaching her aunty.          My biggest reward?          When I hear my children!</p>	<p>The work is taxing, keeping up with  <i>Halq'eméylem</i>, caring for the kids, having little          time for Koyàlemót. So what inspires her to          continue, to not throw in the towel? Why her          little ones, in all their innocence, like angels          appearing in a time of need at just the right          moment, "<i>Éy slát, tl'lsòrɛ</i> [Good night. I          love you]."</p> <p>Just as the language sharing is having a ripple          effect, so do the challenges, the questions of          what to do, and how to do the right thing          with the children. Whether to speak only  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> is that cheating the child? Or          whether to compromise and give both          English and Halq'eméylem at the same time.          Not a trite question, indeed. And there are          further benefits. The babysitter aunty is          learning <i>Halq'eméylem</i> too through the          children.</p> <p>The journey has been full of fears and doubts          of all sorts along the way. Most currently, is</p>
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The challenge is time  
To learn more about the language.  
After this mentoring course  
With Stó:lō Shxwéí,  
There's not going to be anymore  
Language courses  
For the more advanced students.  
What are we going to do?  
We have to keep going.

When linguistics first started,  
I was apprehensive about it.  
We had a non-native instructor.  
Well, the elders, Rosaleen,  
Elizabeth, and Tillie were there.  
I just felt really uncomfortable;  
It didn't seem right.  
We had a non-Native instructor  
To understand form, structure and analysis  
Of the language. I didn't understand  
What linguistics was about;  
Never heard of linguistics before.  
Thought, okay I'm here learning,  
And if the elders stay here, I'll stay too.  
And they did. They were just so happy  
That we were wanting to learn,  
Have a desire to learn.  
If they just had the instructor,  
I don't know if I would have attended  
The class at that time.  
It was about the third linguistics course  
Where we learned how to develop  
Long sentences. That interested me;  
It would mean more fluency.  
After that, I really enjoyed it.

In level I and II and III,  
It was just a small group of us, and  
One time we were just five students.  
We thought, Oh my gosh,  
You know the elders keep saying,  
You guys are the ones

of all sorts along the way. Most currently, is  
the challenge of time to grow in the language.

The opportunities for Koyàlemót to learn  
Halq'eméylem in a structured environment  
are diminishing, while Koyàlemót must now  
provide the learning experience for others.

What now? The more advanced student will  
be left to their own devices, their own  
ingenuity, and a lonely prospect at times.

Earlier in her Halq'eméylem learning  
experience, Koyàlemót was sceptical of the  
quality of teaching provided. What, a non-  
Native instructor? "It didn't seem right. But  
the doubts were allayed with the support of  
the elders, and the rewards of learning greater  
knowledge of the intricacies of the language.  
"We learned how to develop longer  
sentences."

Koyàlemót is apprehensive that once the  
elders are gone, the burden will be placed on  
a few, who feel competent with so little of the

<p>To take over the language.  This is a big responsibility.  I never envisioned myself a teacher.  We started having more students, and  I was really happy we could share  This load. It's not going to be  Put on a few.  But I don't see the leaders involved.</p> <p>In Xolhméylh, we have  A fifteen minute lesson in Halq'eméylem.  All the programs have Halq'eméylem,  And <i>X'wélmwxcwskwáx</i>,  You know, Indian names.  They put Halq'eméylem tapes  Into company cars;  There's greetings and the prayers.  They are encouraging people  To learn the language, listen, to hear it.  People think were not doing enough,  Not moving fast enough;  We are moving.</p> <p>Our language shows  What Stó:lō people spoke;  Nobody else has this language.  We have sister languages  Over on the Island;  We have this interconnection.  There must be history behind that;  We should learn and understand it.  I went to a couple of language conferences,  And seen Musqueam there.  We should recognize our sister language.  No one does that. It didn't happen;  They didn't recognize us.  We're losing our cultural protocols,</p> <p>My kids naturally say the sounds, Consonants,  and vowels; they just say it.  To me it's right in them.  They can say the pops and the <u>xxxs</u>,  All these sounds.</p>	<p>a few, who feel competent with so little of the  language. But her fears are allayed with  recognition that a growing number of  students are joining the wee army of  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> language revivalists.</p> <p>Additionally, there exist CDs of older  speakers of the language that are available  from the Stó:lō Nation Archives which may  include stories, conversations, words and  cultural knowledge and most are not  transcribed. Brent Galloway provided these  CDs which include 400 hours of elders  speaking. Koyàlemót remains concerned,  however, that she does not see the leaders  involved in learning Halq'eméylem. Although  activity in Halq'eméylem language revival  never seemed to be happening fast enough,  Koyàlemót recognizes that "we are moving."</p> <p>Another challenge Koyàlemót observes is  learning all there is to know about the  Halq'eméylem language, the interconnections</p>
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They don't think about it; they just do it.  
My children are speaking English, and  
They have Halq'eméylem sounds.  
The teachers notice it,  
An accent or something.  
I see other Stó:lō people learning;  
It's natural, so simple, as if having been  
around the language all the time.  
I found it easy to remember;  
Felt the creator always there, helping me  
Get strength. It wasn't just my own self,  
The creator was helping, yeah.

In my life, all I heard  
About First Nations people, was  
A bunch of drunk alcoholics, stupid.  
I even thought I was going to be alcoholic,  
Because that's all I heard.  
My guidance counsellor said,  
"Oh, you'll never go to University,  
Never go to college;  
Just go for the modified program."  
I did.

It was grade nine, or social studies,  
We were talking about the totem poles.  
And the teachers were saying,  
"It's just like the Native people,  
On the bottom of the totem pole.  
They're poor and don't have  
Much education, not successful."  
And that really hurt.  
I talked to my elder, and he goes,  
"The way I look at it,  
It's the First Nations people  
That's holding up the world,  
Holding up the people."  
I was so happy he said that,  
Cause, you know, he seen different.

My children are in school, and  
My daughter she's really shy.  
It's her personality, really quiet.

with other languages, the history of it, and  
learning the protocols that should be  
practiced in relation to this history of  
interconnections.

The language and the memory of *Halq'eméylem*  
is prevalent, the memory so fresh in our  
history, in our being. Koyàlemót feels "It's  
so natural, as if having been around the  
language all the time." It's not so unusual  
considering that the language came to her ears  
from her own grandmother when she was a  
child. The language is a memory of the not  
so distant past, some might say, even in our  
cell memory, and most certainly, is  
consciously alive in the minds of our precious  
elders.

Getting to our language, for Koyàlemót,  
meant overcoming the tremendous barriers of  
the *st'áxem* effect, getting past the stereotype  
of the drunken alcoholic Indian, of the  
stereotype of Indians being stupid, being "on

<p>They wanted to do testing on her, to See where her academic abilities are. I said, "No, there's nothing wrong with her, That's just her personality." To me, that's cultural differences.</p> <p>At a teacher/parent night at Skowkale, Stephen Point, a chief there at that time, He welcomed them, Shared his experience With the public school system. He was quiet, and they said There was something wrong with him, Told him he wouldn't be anything in life. I want to make sure our children Are not subject to that. They can't believe it when I Confront them on it.</p> <p>I had a couple messages From the spirit world. Me and my friend Kaxta, Yvonne, Helped someone help this guy On the other side. When he's leaving to go home To the other side, he said he knew You were learning the language. And he goes, "All I want to tell you is, When you teach the language, You teach it with love, Teach the children with love." I make sure that I try to do that.</p> <p>I see competition amongst the students. Like, who's got the most knowledge? Who's better? I don't really agree. To me, there's no unity. We were all getting along; Had a lot of love for each other, and Soon as jobs came into the picture, Things started to change. Being competitive, I don't think it should be</p>	<p>stereotype of Indians being stupid, being "on the bottom of the totem pole." Koyàlemót reaches to her elders for their wisdom, for their words of reassurance. They unequivocally deny the stereotypes, they, who have a reach beyond the <i>st'áxem</i> effect, and who have lived closer to a time when <i>smá:l̓h</i> was the norm, a time when Stó:lō people knew their history.</p> <p>Now Koyàlemót takes on the junior elder role for her own children, confronting the stereotypes head on, confronting those in the roles who deliberately or not, continue the legacy of the <i>st'áxem</i> effect. "No, there's nothing wrong with her. That's just her personality," says Koyàlemót, challenging her child's teacher.</p> <p>The most powerful teaching shared by Koyàlemót in our talk was the one from the spirit world, "When you teach the language, you teach it with love, teach the children with</p>
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<p>In the language at all.</p> <p>We have to find a way to gauge How a person is doing. If they just gave a pass, Nobody's getting an A, B, C or D. That way, you'd get rid of this competition. I'm trained through my grandmother And through the longhouse. You don't go around boasting, Saying this is what I got. It's non-Native thinking versus The Native way. The grading system is not <i>Shxwalméxwelh s'áyléxw,</i> Not our life.</p> <p>Community members Said that they have no intentions Of becoming a teacher. They want programs where They're there to learn, But not to become a teacher. I guess it just seems Too structured for them. The people are talking. Jim Harris, he goes, We shouldn't be focussing On learning to write. I spend a lot of hours learning How to write, and could be spending This time learning it orally.</p> <p>Sometimes I think we don't have The support of the people. But I just feel like they're saying, "Why are you doing it?" It's just about gone; All our elders are just about gone." They understand the history, what People went through in The residential schools. Mom went to residential school.</p>	<p>you teach it with love, teach the children with love." This philosophy is transformed into Koyàlemót's understanding of the First Nations way of life, <i>shxwalméxwelh s'áyléxw,</i> of how we should conduct ourselves with each other as human beings, a teaching which resonates with teachings from the longhouse, resonates with teachings from her grandmother.</p> <p>How do we refine the process of offering <i>Halq'éréylem</i> to community members who just want to learn to speak the language? The focus of <i>Stó:lō Shxwéłí</i> so far has been on training people to become teachers, and for sure, we need that kind of dedicated spirit to develop <i>Halq'eméylem</i> language experts. Otherwise, who will teach the others? The <i>Halq'éréylem</i> language that is being offered to community members is taught in a highly structured context with a system of grading that Koyàlemót opposes. "The people are</p>
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I don't know that she heard the language.  
I've seen it's been healing for her,  
Going to Halq'eméylem.  
I could see she looked different to me,  
Looks more happier.  
It made her spirit feel good,  
Taking back some of her power.

*Postscript: Koyàlemót shared these thoughts in an email to me on January 27, 2002.*

*As the student progresses in the learning of the language, one needs to identify and fine-tune his/her gift in the Halq'eméylem language. I have witnessed that one student may have a gift in learning and teaching the traditional songs, or one may have a gift in writing the Halq'eméylem language, or one may have a gift in transcribing the language, or one may have the gift of teaching the language, whether it is specifically to young children or adults. Or one may have the gift of developing curriculum. I do not think it would be fair or possible to put these responsibilities upon one individual. And if one specializes in one of these areas he/she would be expert in a specific area/level of the language. As you can see, there is a lot of work ahead of the people learning and reviving the language. Since the original interview on November 13, 2000, wonderful things have transpired in the future of the Halq'eméylem language –I.e.: Developmental Standard Term Certificate Project.*

talking,” says Koyàlemót, and feels she and others “could be spending more time learning Halq'eméylem orally.” The student is required to learn both the oral and written aspects of the Halq'eméylem language. From her personal experience, a lot of time is required to learn the written language adequately, especially for the written mid-term/final exams and assignments. However, the writing system gives the key to the full dictionary to be finished by Galloway in 2002. We highly depend on the written word now, since we have so few fluent speakers.

There now exists three generations within Mary's family participating in the revival of the language; her daughter, her mother and herself. Who would have thought this kind of ripple effect would have transpired?

Lastly, Koyàlemót's reference to her Mom who went to residential school and is learning the language, sums up the spirit of

*Halq'eméyem* language revival nicely,

“It made her spirit feel good, taking back some of her power.”

Re: Postscript:

Koyàlemót outlines the vast array of skills and expertise that is involved in *Halq'eméyem* revival work. With so relatively few people, at this time, involved in the work, individuals sometimes are required to take on many of these responsibilities.



Tyrone McNeil

***“A reawakening of what’s there.”***

**TYRONE MCNEIL.**

January 9, 2001. At the Seabird Island Cultural Building on the Seabird Island Reserve.

Back then it was natural,  
It just flowed out.  
Now, other than the few  
Well-spoken elders,  
It seems memorized.  
I picture kids in a play  
Trying to memorize a script  
As they’re going along,  
Pronouncing each word separately.  
It isn’t the continuous flow we heard  
When we were kids.  
In print, you see  
Something like *Shxwenti:kw* [uncle or aunt].  
Our elders know how to say that fully.  
It might have been *Shxwenti:kw,*  
Pronouncing that little tail end,  
But so silently.  
The expression on their face, or mouth  
Told more what that word was.  
Whereas now, we’re unfamiliar  
With the language.  
We sound it out fully,  
More accents where there wasn’t then.

To be honest, I can’t remember  
Halq’eméylem too much as a youngster.  
It was more Thompson.  
The only Halq’eméylem I really heard  
Was at festivals we had each spring,  
Somebody pounding the drums,  
Being really too drunk, a Slahal game,  
Or something going on.

**Tyrone**

Tyrone’s appearance in my study came as an unexpected gift. I had arrived at the Seabird Island Cultural Building to meet with Kwósel and was surprised to see Tyrone and *Tseloyóbet* also there. I knew Tyrone through his role as a councillor of the Seabird Island First Nation, and the portfolio holder of education, which includes language.

Tyrone, one of the few politicians who are actively concerned about the critical state of our language, enrolled in one of the *Halq’eméylem* linguistics courses offered through *Stó:ló Shxweli*. His role as councillor provided him with the opportunity “to go strongly with the language,” though his interest was “tweaked when my daughter was singing.” I isolated Tyrone’s and Kwósel’s stories from each other to enable me to focus on each one individually.

It was consistent back then,  
Always some kind of language happening  
At the festival, and  
To a lesser extent, at events  
Other than the festival. It  
Wasn't very commonplace.

I mostly heard my uncles speak Thompson,  
At Union Bar where we fish.  
All my uncles spoke.  
There are no more Thompson speakers  
On Seabird Island, considering  
Most of us are Thompson,  
At least got roots to Thompson.  
All my mother's side and my father's  
Come from Nlakapmux.  
We were forcibly moved downward.  
A small portion of Seabird  
Would have been moved over from Stó:lō,  
From the bottom Stó:lō up.

At the youngest age,  
It was kind of there,  
But what hurt it the most  
Was being a bit older, early teens,  
Even, say 10 and older, viewing it as  
Some kind of silly foreign language.  
That's what everybody else thought of it  
Back then.  
Probably around that age  
We were driven away  
From it altogether,  
Mostly from the public school.

We have a language program  
Here at the school.  
My daughter was in the program.  
If it wasn't for my daughter  
Being in the program,  
I probably wouldn't have an interest.  
When my kids are singing at special  
Events, it kind of gets my blood going.  
That's what really got me interested,

on each one individually.

Tyrone remembers, as do others, a  
*Halq'éréylem* language spoken that flowed  
more smoothly than what we hear today from  
the ones who are struggling to learn our  
language. Today, we are more akin to babies,  
or first graders trying to sound out each letter  
in sequence, in our attempts to speak  
*Halq'éréylem*. Whereas before, the language  
spoken was more synchronized with its  
natural rhythms and accents. Tyrone doesn't  
remember a prevalence of *Halq'éréylem* at  
Seabird in his younger days. Thompson  
would have been more prevalent, "All my  
mother's side and my father's come from  
Nlakapmux. We were forcibly moved  
downward [to *Stó:lō* territory]." Nonetheless,  
he would hear *Halq'éréylem* at spring festivals  
and *slahál* games, but doesn't recall that it was  
commonplace. More common to Tyrone  
would be hearing his uncles speaking

Seeing my kids singing.  
The greatest reward for me  
Would be my kids talking,  
And anything else,  
What I hear in the school,  
All that's a plus.

Personally, it's like a grounding.  
I'm not by any means fluent,  
But it seems natural, not only speaking,  
But hearing it spoken, and how it's spoken.  
When you speak,  
It isn't necessarily a set item;  
It's a description of an item.  
That's the natural part, it seems.  
The proper translation  
For riverbank,  
If you look in the dictionary,  
There are probably 15 translations  
For riverbank.  
Riverbank might be  
A description of a bank  
On a certain part of the river,  
As opposed to riverbank in the broad sense.  
Could say the same thing  
For a fair amount of written words.  
Not only are you saying something,  
You are saying something about  
A specific place on a specific part  
Of the river.

I've been involved with the language  
The last couple of years;  
*Tseloyóthbaet* has been my teacher.  
Although my interest was tweaked  
When my daughter was singing,  
I never really got involved  
Until I came on council on Seabird.  
Education is my portfolio, and  
Chose to go strongly with language.  
I had that opportunity. It  
Brought me into this building  
With *Kwaísel* and *Tseloyóthbaet*.

Thompson where they fished at "Union Bar"  
The *st'áxcem* effect was well entrenched in  
Tyrone's youth, where teens and younger  
viewed *Halq'eméylem* "as some kind of silly  
foreign language." Tyrone credits the public  
school for generating this type of attitude  
among the children. But the school at  
Seabird would prove to be a boon for Tyrone,  
generating a newfound interest in the  
language through his daughter who attends  
and learns *Halq'eréylem* there. "If it wasn't for  
my daughter being in the program, I probably  
wouldn't have an interest," he says, and  
derives much satisfaction and joy in "seeing  
his kids singing [in the language]."

There is a naturalness about the language for  
*Stó:ló* people, "a grounding," in speaking it,  
hearing it and understanding its connection to  
the River culture. And though learning the  
language comes easy to Tyrone, the influence  
of the written word thwarts his ability to

<p>If I wasn't a councillor, I probably wouldn't be as interested As I am now.</p> <p>For the most part, learning The language is easy. I confuse myself when I try, Rather than picture what a word Is supposed to sound like, Find myself picturing how it's written. It slows me down more than helps. It's habit already, Hard to break the habit.</p> <p>I probably speak it more at home Than anywhere else, With my two daughters, ages three and ten. My youngest daughter now, Says <i>sp'óq'és</i> long before she says eagle. Driving along and "there's a <i>sp'óq'és</i> [bald eagle]." Not an eagle, you know, it's a <i>sp'óq'és</i> . She's just in daycare, but I teach her mainly. The youngest one surprises Both <i>Tsəloyóbehuet</i> and <i>Kwúsel</i> On her pronunciation already. It's not bang on, but she's at that age They'll learn quick. With her grandmothers on the phone, it's her "táta," her "sile," "the sile." I'm building my vocabulary through them More than anything else, really. It's been worthwhile.</p> <p>At an event, I hear others speak. If you don't follow up with An English translation immediately, It's frowned upon by the audience, A kind of beef with the audience. Some might know what you're saying, And kind of just listen. Others, have no idea what you're saying,</p>	<p>speak, to know "what a word is supposed to sound like." His opportunities to speak Halq'eméylem present themselves mostly at home with his daughters, where teaching them offers him opportunities to build his own vocabulary. Having too few opportunities for learners to hear the language presents a huge dilemma for <i>Halq'eméylem</i> revival.</p> <p>While individuals such as Tyrone are able to focus their attention on the language, prevalence of the language in the rest of the community is not strong. Tyrone observes that audiences prefer that if <i>Halq'eméylem</i> is used that it be translated for their benefit, or they're not interested in hearing it. "The language isn't prevalent at the community level yet," says Tyrone. He feels "the want to learn" is there, but that they need more opportunities to learn.</p> <p>The Seabird Island Community School is the</p>
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<p>And unless you translate, They're not interested. I get that just by looking around. How do you react if you don't know What's being said? It's just kind of a blank section, Until English. At most events, The language is usually more In a song form. Everybody just likes the way it is, Especially the kids.</p> <p>The language isn't prevalent At the community level yet. The key is opportunities That allow people to learn. The want to learn is there. Unless you're a student In a school like Seabird Island's, The opportunities are limited. If they have no opportunities, Soon they're going to lose interest.</p> <p>The language started creeping Its way into the Band Office. <i>Kwósel</i> and <i>Tseloyóbehuet</i> Were having classes over there. The couple I made it to Had a fair attendance. After five/six months straight When I went again, The attendance wasn't there. That's right about the time Once in a while you'd get "<i>Éy látalh.</i>" After awhile, even that's out. It'll happen again, for sure. We just got a little bit lax. It's time to pick it up, hold it up again.</p> <p>Most of the resources we use Is developed here in one way or another. We're advancing a little;</p>	<p>main source in Seabird Island for learning the language. However, there have been efforts to teach the language in the community (see <i>Kwósel</i>), and there have been efforts to teach it to the Band Office staff. Tyrone is sure "It'll happen again... Time to pick it up, hold it up again." Though the language is offered full swing in the school, in the community, efforts are happening in fits and starts. It's not easy.</p> <p>The school program includes its own challenges in the delivery of <i>Halq'erýlen</i> to the students. Scarce resources being one, translating resources into modern technology is another, and reliance on so few experts, elders fluent in the language, is probably the greatest challenge in the work. Tyrone feels that language work in more communities would enable Seabird Island School to do its work more efficiently. On a practical note, Tyrone emphasizes that to do any of the</p>
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Digitizing the language.  
 We fall back on Brent's work,  
 And on some of the others'  
 To complement what we're doing already.  
 Most of our work is curricula based  
 For the school.  
 There's not a whole lot  
 For K-12 schools.  
 A good chunk of that development is  
 Reliance on one individual.  
 Now, it's *Tseloyóbehuet* [Shirley Julian Norris],  
 Before that, it was *Siyámálexw* [Joe Aleck],  
 And before that, it was Edna [Edna Bobb].

We need tools right now,  
 To support our IRP.  
 That established, we'd be coasting.  
 We're having to develop and teach  
 At the same time,  
 A bit of a struggle sometimes.  
 It would make our position easier  
 If more was happening  
 In the other communities.  
 We seem to be the leading force  
 Between Seabird School and Shxwelí.  
 Little else happening.  
 If it came more from the grassroots,  
 We'd be that much stronger.  
 The more they're learning  
 At the community level,  
 The more they can expect us  
 To draw on their strength  
 To teach the kids.  
 The resource we need is money,  
 No matter what we do.  
 We always end up needing money.

The language has become  
 More accepted,  
 A normal course of speech  
 On an individual basis.  
 At an event now, it's normal  
 To have kids sing a song,

things that need to be done; we "always end  
 up needing money." Despite the challenges  
 presented, the school program has given birth  
 to a new tradition at Seabird where, "A  
 normal course of an event now, is to have  
 kids sing a song, "and "has become an  
 expectation."

Tyrone thinks deeply about the language and  
 what it means for us to have our language.

An important role that language plays in our  
 lives is that it distinguishes us as "unique from  
 anybody else," contraindicating total  
 assimilation into the dominant settler society  
 where we are relegated to *st'áxem* status.

Learning the language and the culture, he  
 feels, begins to strengthen the self-esteem of  
*Stó:lō* people, producing a *smelá:lh* effect, and  
 that even introducing "minute levels... we'll  
 get a trickle down effect," producing "whole  
 families of fluent speakers."

Regardless of what that song is.  
For a lot of people, it makes the event,  
Seeing somebody from their family  
Up there singing.  
Kids in a small ceremony  
Has become an expectation.

In the recent past,  
Language wasn't there.  
There wasn't anything to disassociate us  
From non-First Nations.  
Most of our people don't excel off reserve.  
We're seeing more and more people  
Not going off reserve,  
Whether it's for school or visiting. We  
Don't have to be part of what's out there;  
We could be our own society here.  
People are becoming more interested  
In learning the language. It  
Affords them to be unique  
From anybody else.  
Until 10 years ago,  
We never had that opportunity.  
We were just the bottom end  
Of the dominant society.  
We don't have to be now.  
That's especially so in Seabird.  
We don't have the cultural background  
That other Bands do.  
We haven't had a smoke house here  
In 120 years.  
In other Bands it's normal  
To have one, and more than one.

Once they start learning the language,  
They are learning a part of the culture.  
It starts building self-esteem,  
Strengthening them. With the  
Minute levels introduced, they're  
Starting to see light  
At the end of the tunnel.  
A little bit of interest,  
And we're almost guaranteed

Challenges in *Halq'erréyem* language revival include time, not enough of it, resources that need to be created and the expertise required to develop them. However, teaching and/or learning a near extinct language will not be the same as teaching/learning a language that is flourishing with speakers, resources and prominence in the community. The manner of teaching and learning *Halq'erréyem* and the resources needed will evolve, for example, as Tyrone says "What we're teaching in grade 12 now, we may be teaching in grade 5 five years from now." For the time being, our greatest challenge is reliance on our few elders and need to look to a day when we stand on our own two feet and proceed without them.

Another challenge Tyrone is concerned about is that of maintaining our uniqueness as Upriver people. Tyrone feels that if we borrow words from other dialects, "we will lose what makes us Upriver, that's our link to

We'll get a trickle down effect  
Within a couple of generations.  
We'll have whole families  
Of fluent speakers.

The odd part is,  
It's still not accepted outside.  
We've become strong, and  
Don't care what they think.  
We're proud to be Indians.  
In the past, we relied too much  
On what they thought of us;  
We responded to that.

There's not enough time  
In the day to do stuff.  
Resources that aren't there  
Need to be created.  
We're not assured access  
To resource development  
And the expertise required,  
Be that computer programming, or  
Someone with a masters  
In curriculum development.

Tools in English are  
Simple to translate into Halq'eméylem.  
Tools for a school in an  
On-reserve environment  
Is a little bit different.  
We can't always just draw off  
What they're doing in the public school.  
Though our outcomes are the same,  
How we get there is different.  
We're teaching the language from k-12.  
Each year is going to get  
Progressively harder.  
Kids are going to become  
More and more skilled.  
We can't just develop something this year  
That's going to be good  
For the next ten years.  
It's going to be under some kind

the land." He describes the language as  
having evolved from the land and its  
resources. Tyrone believes that our language  
use today will never mirror how it was used in  
the past; due, I suppose, to the fact that we do  
not live in relation to the land as our people  
once did. He believes that because of this,  
"we're losing part of our identity." "Instead  
of being unique *Stó:lō* people," he says, "we'll  
be people who speak *Halq'eméylem*," and that  
in "living the language, there's definitely  
weakness."

On the other hand, Tyrone also feels that  
"without the opportunity to be a unique  
people, we're going to be fully assimilated,  
integrated within the dominant society.  
"Language and culture plays to our  
strengths," he says, while "assimilation,  
integration plays to our weaknesses." The  
weaknesses he refers to are related to the  
*st'áxcem* status we hold in Canadian society for

<p>Of developing or tweaking.  What we're teaching in grade 12 now,  We may teach in grade 5  Five years from now.</p> <p>On my list of challenges,  One's got to be the elders,  The limited time we have left  With these ones that are contributing  So much right now.  That's a huge challenge.  Once these elders stop, or move on,  We're going to be struggling.  We're really fortunate  To have these four or five elders.  Don't think we can get a group  Like that again.  Right now, we have  Elders to fall back on,  To kind of prove what we're saying,  And support us.  Once that support isn't there,  It'll be a bit of a struggle.</p> <p>A certain word or phrase,  Common from Upriver to Downriver  To the Island, we could probably borrow.  But when that phrase is specific  To a certain part of the river,  a creek, a mountain, it won't work.  If we went wholly to borrowing,  We'd lose what makes us Upriver,  That's our link to the land.  Fifty years ago, language  Was based on land, and  The resources of the land.  Now, it's not, hardly at all,  It's more conversational now.</p> <p>The language back then,  Couldn't separate it from culture.  But today, in the future, you can.  A natural evolution of the language,</p>	<p>the most part at least. As for the strengths,  when we practice our language and culture, he  infers that we use a more natural, inherent  part of ourselves, drawing on our affective  ways of being. "It's a re-awakening of what's  there... it's real personal, comes from a feeling  within, or a feeling for ancestors," he says.</p> <p>Will our language become a living functional  language again? Tyrone is doubtful that  fluency will go beyond "an individual family  basis." Fluency holds promise if Stó:lō  people are able to pursue economic  opportunity on-reserve. Tyrone looks at the  practical side of things, "If forced to go off  reserve for economic opportunities, we're not  going to use our language." And that makes a  whole lot of sense, because who will there be  to talk to? More importantly, in order for us  to have a remote chance at functional fluency,  we "need to look at what's got to be done to  get the language into the home." Having it</p>
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<p>A movement away from culture.  Language was a description  Of what's happening.  Today, it's different,  Be that a physical item, emotion  Or something, it's just different  Back then than now. We  Can record it,  Put it in a museum,  But we're never going to use it  As it was.</p> <p>Our language right now,  Ties the past with the present.  Five years from now,  It's going to be just the present.  We're losing part of our identity.  Instead of being unique Stó:lō people, We're  going to be people  That speak Halq'eméylem.  There's a certain uniqueness in  Speaking a second language,  But living that language,  There's definite weakness.  That's part of us evolving again.  There's no preventing us assimilating  In some form or manner  With the dominant society,  It's just how much we choose to retain.</p> <p>In the past, probably 'til now,  To hold a cultural event,  Language is a gimme.  Do we continue doing that?  How many cultural events  Do we have in a year?  It would ensure certain material  Is carried forward.  It is relatively easy for us to do here.  Across the river,  It's not the same case.  I was really shocked to talk to  Some well-known, well-established people,</p>	<p>just in the school will not be enough.</p> <p>We are a thread away from full assimilation, a  breath away from language death, and the  resources required to reverse this trend are for  the most part outside our control, especially  outside of the control of the people involved  in the language work. Tyrone is a politician in  his own right, and there is no doubt where  the importance of language lies in his  thinking. He supports the language work in  any way he can. His political astuteness leads  him to understand the realities of economics  for getting things done. "Financial ties to  language and culture can go a long way," he  says. He also understand the importance of  garnering the support of the other political  leaders to mobilize the resources required to  get things done, "We are relying on Stó:lō  Nation because of the treaty."</p>
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Traditional people  
In the smoke house for years and years.  
The only Halq'eméylem they know, are  
The songs they sing in the smokehouse. They  
don't know conversational Halq'eméylem.  
That really shocked me.

We can't continue culture, and  
Expect language to keep up.  
It's obviously not working.  
We can't continue language, and  
Expect culture to do that either.  
That's not working. We're  
Doing what we can to sustain language.  
In the next little while, we can see  
Some similar effort to retain culture.  
It kind of gets to our uniqueness  
And worldview.  
Without the opportunity  
To be a unique people,  
We're just going to be fully assimilated,  
Integrated within the dominant society.

Continuing language and culture  
Plays to our strengths.  
Take the language and culture away,  
Start assimilation, integration,  
Plays to our weaknesses.  
We've proven we don't fit well,  
Don't hold the high paying jobs,  
Not enough of us well educated.  
Take away language and culture,  
All we're left to play with  
Is our weaknesses.  
Within language and culture,  
We have lots of strengths to play with.

What's the difference if we're speaking  
Halq'eméylem or English?  
For me anyway,  
And for a lot of others,  
It's a re-awakening of what's there.  
You're not just born

And you're white or you're Indian.  
It's an individual response to something,  
To the world.  
As soon as you step off of Seabird,  
You're one small part  
Of a huge scheme of things.  
Even an emotional description  
Of something we've gone through  
In the past, it's really personal.  
It comes from a feeling within,  
Or a feeling for ancestors,  
A feeling for something.  
It's not the case out there.  
They don't care about individuals.  
As long as you do your job,  
You're non-existent.  
Sitting in a classroom,  
You're one of many,  
Not an individual.

On an individual family basis,  
The language can become  
A living functional language again.  
A broader basis will depend on  
How we attain resources,  
Whether that's for language,  
Job creation, or whatever.  
As long as we can continue to do  
That kind of stuff on-reserve,  
The language will foster and flourish.  
But if the day comes that we're  
Not funded the same way,  
Not receiving the resources to hire  
Twenty people to do a job,  
These twenty people are going  
To have to go off reserve.  
If there's a change like that,  
It'll be hard to retain language revival.  
Funded that way, we're able to be  
A closed society,  
Able to have our own program,  
Have our own school here,  
Our own daycare.

If that funding changes,  
Forcing us to integrate  
Even a little more than right now,  
It'll be tough to retain our language.  
If forced to go off reserve  
For economic opportunities,  
We're not going to use our language.

Some families with one, maybe two  
Children in the school, is  
The only access to language  
We have right now.  
If they move somewhere else,  
Or just have an argument with us, and  
Don't send their kids here anymore,  
That severs the language tie.  
We need to look at what's got to be done  
To get the language into the home.

Where we go from here?  
So much is tied to resources, or things  
That we don't have control of.  
The language may be made or broke  
By outside influences  
That have nothing to do with us.  
We can struggle all we want,  
If we don't have the resources...  
We're not to the point yet where  
We can be self-sufficient, language-wise.  
We desperately need the  
Support of the political leaders.  
If on the backburner,  
We'll be spinning our wheels,  
Either at Seabird or Stó:lō Nation.  
We are relying on Stó:lō Nation  
Because of the treaty,  
For economic opportunities  
Around language and culture.  
Financial ties to language and culture  
Can go a long way.





*Xwelxwiya* Rena Peter

***“It just has to burst through.”***

**RENA A. PETER.**

November 29, 2000. At the interviewer’s home in Sardis.

My name is Xwelíxwiya,  
From the Skowkale Band.  
I was born and raised in Chilliwack,  
A hereditary carrier  
For the wolf people.

I am originally from Sumas; however,  
During the time of the White people  
First coming to the Valley,  
It was a tradition  
That the men be moved  
To where the wife comes from.  
But priests were here and they believed  
The wife should move  
To where the husband comes from.  
My mother left Sumas,  
Moved to Sardis.

My mother is the hereditary carrier. (\* see adjacent column)  
After she passes away, I become  
The hereditary carrier for our people.  
It’s an old tradition  
That the women carry  
All the names,  
All the areas where the men trap, and  
All the designs for the baskets,  
For the weavings,  
All the stories,  
All the places where our people

**Xwelíxwiya**

Xwelíxwiya and I met at my home for our talk. We would have fewer distractions there than at my office, where we originally were going to meet. When I first met Xwelíxwiya in linguistics classes at *Stó:lō Shxwæł*, I had no idea of how deeply involved she was in practicing *Stó:lō* culture. She takes her cultural role very seriously, and though she does not teach the language in a classroom setting, she insists that she is a *Halq’eméylem* language teacher. She is adamant that *Halq’eméylem* will fulfill a piece of the puzzle that she feels will bring her to cultural wholeness. I felt an immediate friendship with Xwelíxwiya when we were in the linguistics classes, and I noticed she had this effect on others too. í exudes a bubbly friendliness and a deep

<p>Picked berries, Got their roots, Through the hereditary carrier. And the hereditary chief Is from the hereditary carrier. It goes through the women; My oldest son is in line.</p> <p>We still carry the culture The same way it was passed on Generation after generation.</p> <p>The language was spoken around me As long as I can remember, All of 50 years ago. My grandparents spoke the language, My dad and my mother. He was raised with his grandparents. My grandmother couldn't speak English; Spoke real broken English, Something we got used of hearing. My mother's mother spoke the language, A different language, [a dialect, actually] Halq'eméylem Sumas. Same language, Different words here and there. My English has gotten better Since working in the school system. My language was very broken; I had a strong Halq'eméylem accent. My vocabulary in English was small, Didn't speak my language fluent, Knew words here and there. To listen to me you would have thought I had a second language, The way my accent was.</p> <p>Our language was something natural, It wasn't something that was different. I never thought they were speaking In a different language; It was just a natural thing. Dad and his grandmother would be talking,</p>	<p>exudes a bubbly friendliness and a deep respect for others, great qualities befitting a junior elder.</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya introduced herself by her <i>Halq'eméylem</i> name, and the community she is from, the Skowkale Band. She quickly explained that her roots link her to the Sumas people with whom she strongly associates.</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya attributes being at her current location of residence to outside influences, to the "White people first coming to the valley." Traditionally, the man would move to the woman's community.</p> <p>She inherits her cultural role from her mother, a role that includes learning a wide range of cultural traditions and teachings that she is responsible for knowing. This role looms largely in Xwelíxwiya's life, having received many of the teachings throughout her growing up years from her mother, and also by deliberately pursuing them in her</p>
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<p>And we would just sit, listen to them, and          Could pick up things they were saying          By the way they talked, their tones.</p> <p>I never had that kind of shame;          Wasn't a residential school student;          Was always raised at home, and          Went to a public school.          It [Halq'eméylem] wasn't something different;          No feeling one way or the other,          It was normal.          We didn't socialize;          Not many people lived around us.          Next door neighbor was a mile away,          I mean white people.          We didn't mingle with white people;          We were quiet in school.          No one asked us why or how come.          No one seemed to pay attention          To what we thought and felt.          So, the way we were at home,          It just stayed that way.          It was in high school I realized,          After my grandmother passed away,          Why there wasn't anybody          Talking the language anymore.</p> <p>It meant an awful lot to Dad. **          He started the Halq'eméylem program,          Would go and tape all the elders;          It was in the early 60s. ***          He could foresee that the language was dying;          It really bothered him.          He would tape them          On a real old reel to reel;          Turned them over to Coqualeetza.          I thought, Oh dad, what are you worrying          About all that stuff for?          Things won't die out.          But as I got older...</p> <p>I spoke Halq'eméylem, not fluent.          Only words, like hello, pass the sugar,</p>	<p>by deliberately pursuing them in her          adulthood for some thirty years now. She has          some definite plans for how she wants to          manifest this role, which includes creating a  <i>Stó:lō</i> cultural school called <i>Térécw Shxweli</i>.          Xwelíxwiya's main cultural teacher, her mom,          lives away from <i>Stó:lō</i> territory, with her          husband in Terrace, but maintains close ties          with Xwelíxwiya and the <i>Stó:lō</i> community,          especially in the winter season, a time when          important cultural work is being done.</p> <p>If the idea of "hereditary carriers," "wolf          people," and ways of passing on names          diverges from what is known to be traditional  <i>Stó:lō</i> practice (Galloway, 2002 p.c.), then we          can conclude that <i>Stó:lō</i> people are adopting          many new ways of being <i>Stó:lō</i>, blending the          "old," the "new," and the "other."</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya's early recollections of  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> being spoken around her are          strong and prevalent in her memory, though</p>
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<p>Butter, and stuff like that, cigarettes;  Never used it consistently.  I joined the longhouse at twenty-one;  It was spoken there fluently all the time.  There was people from the Island  That spoke the language,  And the Island's language is  A little different.  They talked of different things, of course,  Talking names, blankets, money,  Longhouse talk.  Dad would always be with us, would  Translate what they were talking,  And we got to understand  What they were saying.</p> <p>I never, ever thought,  That our language was leaving.  I didn't know what to do.  My dad was doing his best  To tape and get things done,  Like the stories and whatnot.  I had the same dream as him.</p> <p>People on our Band  Never thought too much of the language.  Church was a big influence at that time.  They thought, leave that stuff behind.  Learn English, and get on with your life.  That's the way it's going to be now;  Never mind the past.</p> <p>Dad was a teacher when I started learning  The language at Tzeachten Hall.  It was probably '68.  It wasn't very popular,  But dad was full bore with it.  He got elders Richard Malloway,  Elder Kelly, he's just passed away.  His wife Dell, and himself, Roy Point,  Oh, and Danny Charlie Sr.  They were teaching the language  At Tzeachten Hall, the old Tzeachten Hall.</p>	<p>she never learned to speak it fluently. Both  her parents and her grandparents spoke  <i>Halq'éréyem</i>, providing a rich environment of  <i>Halq'éréyem</i> around her. The language she  relates to most strongly is Sumas, a sub-dialect  of <i>Halq'éréyem</i>. The prevalence of the  language around her instilled in her a taken-  for-granted naturalness of it in her home  environment, a sense of familiarity. Living  somewhat isolated from outside society  served to consolidate this sense of naturalness  about the language.</p> <p>It wasn't until school days that Xwelíxwiya  realized that the language speaking was  diminishing, "that there wasn't anybody  talking the language anymore." It wasn't until  this time that she would realize "the language  was dying," a concern of her dad's she had  doubted for some time. "Things won't die  out," she said. Her dad, Roy Point, was one  of the earliest <i>Stó:lō</i> pioneers who began</p>
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<p>All guys, and one lady, Dell.  They were the ones that were  Concerned about the language,  Had the language fluency.  Talked it different then than now,  A more singing sort of language.  When they talked the language  They were always happy,  Talking away to each other.  They never, ever spoke English  To each other.  They'd always spoke the language;  It made me happy to see my Dad so happy.  It was his great goal in life.</p> <p>It was very easy to learn  Because the teachers were all elderly,  But not real old;  I would say in their 60s, and  My Dad in his 40s.  Their voices were sharp.  They didn't really make you write it;  They just wanted you to talk it,  So they talked, coat, hat, hello.</p> <p>There were probably 15 of us  Taking the language.  I took the language for two winters;  It was always in winter;  Started in October, and  Ended in December.  I was really happy to take it,  Something me and Dad were doing;  He was proud to be a teacher to me.  And it was a time for me  To get out of the house  Away from my two little girls,  To have a break.</p> <p>I do my best to exercise it every day.  I'm not good at writing it, really;  Not saying I couldn't learn.  I've taken two years of linguistics,</p>	<p>working to establish a movement in the  community to save the language from dying.</p> <p>[** Galloway (2002 p.c.) states that Roy Point  was very active in the Skulkayn Heritage  Project, setting up the first Elders' meeting,  doing interviews, and later being an elder with  the Coqualeetza Elders Group. He also took  the Halq'eméylem Teacher Training courses.  *** Galloway states that the early Skulkayn  Heritage Project was actually 1972-74. Stó:lō  Nation now has all of those tapes, CD copies  made by Galloway and Sonja Van Eijk.]</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya's early language learning was  limited to words like "hello, pass the sugar,  butter and stuff like that, cigarettes," similar  to many others in our generation,  Xwelíxwiya's and my own, at least. Her  exposure to the language reached outside the  home and in the Longhouse, exposing her not  only to a repertoire of Longhouse talk, but to  the Longhouse talk of other dialects of  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> as well. Roy Point understood  the other dialects and shared this knowledge  with his daughter, Xwelíxwiya. Roy had a  dream for the language, and Xwelíxwiya came  to have "the same dream as him." <i>Smé:l̓lh</i></p>
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<p>And didn't have a real hard time,  But it was new for me.  And speaking wasn't hard.  I didn't really like learning things,  Like colors.  I wanted more everyday language;  We weren't getting that.  We were getting things like numbers, colors,  shoes, clothes, and body parts.  Things that we wouldn't use  All in a sentence.</p> <p>I speak with my friend Eddie.  He teaches me phrases, and  We exercise it when we're together.  So, it makes me happy  Because everybody today is learning.  When I talk to young people,  Like my daughters' ages, 30,  And that don't take language classes,  They look at me real blank.  Oh, I don't know what you're saying,  And they feel a little bit ashamed because  They don't know what you're talking.  But, they're happy you're talking;  It's like an honor you would speak to them.  And really all I'm doing is  Hoping they would want to learn.  I speak in phrases to them,  Not in words, i.e. "it's a nice day."  I say, <i>láwsiyám</i>,  And say their Indian name.  They get real fluttered.</p> <p>It tells me that they would  Like to learn the language.  I can see it in their body,  In their eyes, that they are honored  That I would call their Indian name  And talk to them in Halq'eméylem.  They all want to learn the language,  The young people, especially  The young teenagers and the young ones</p>	<p>to have "the same dream as him." <i>Smelá:lb</i>  was strong in this family even as the <i>st'áxem</i>  effect was continuing to have its impact on  our people.</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya credits the Church influence for  entrenching a <i>st'áxem</i> effect in her community  that "never thought too much of the  language," giving way to English as "the way  it's going to be now." Those early pioneers,  Xwelíxwiya's dad and the others, were going  against the grain, not only against the <i>st'áxem</i>  forces imposed from outside, but against the  <i>st'áxem</i> effects that were taking hold more  closely around them.</p> <p>All while the <i>st'áxem</i> forces were taking hold, a  few of the elders were not willing to give up  the affection they held for the language and  for each other, the ones who maintained  fluency in the language. These elders felt a  joy that only a fluent speaker of the language  speaking and listening to another fluent</p>
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<p>Even younger, not teenagers.  I talk to my grandchildren every day  In Halq'eméylem.  <i>Láw, Líhex wxwé éyo?</i>  They say <i>ts'áts'el éy.</i>  I never teach them too much at a time.  They love the language;  They would rather learn Halq'eméylem  Than French or German that's in school.  “Why are we learning those languages?  We should be learning our own.  If we need a second language,  I would love to learn my own.”</p> <p>I do my best to exercise  What I know everyday.  I teach it in the home,  In the community,  At work.  By just talking it to them,  And they say, “What did you say to me?”  And I tell them, and  Then I say to them again, and  Then the next day I say to them again.  Then pretty soon they're using,  They're talking it.  They start answering me back  In Halq'eméylem.  Just keep it up!</p> <p>I see in community use  They're getting the ears for it.  Very curious, unashamed of asking  “What did you say?”  In the primary schools  They're using it, but  They drop it in grade one, when they  No longer go to a Native school.  But they join into a public school, and  Then you don't hear it anymore. But,  They had this at five and four years old.  Around twelve, thirteen,  They're kind of curious again.</p>	<p>speaking and listening to another fluent  speaker could appreciate. “When they talked  the language, they were always happy, talking  away to each other.” At that time, a few <u>men</u>  and one lady were doing the cultural work,  language work, normally the domain of the  women. Today, the roles revert back to the  ladies now, to the few <i>rara aves</i> who are  fluent in Halq'eméylem.</p> <p>Xwelíxwiya has been privileged to have heard  and to have been able to remember a quality  of the language barely heard today, “a more  singing sort of language... their voices were  sharp.” She remembers her dad as being very  proud to be her <i>Halq'énéylem</i> teacher, and the  feeling was mutual; she was proud of her  dad's work in the language, “something me  and my dad were doing.” Going to  <i>Halq'énéylem</i> classes in those earlier days was  not without its practical reward, “time for me  to get out of the house.”</p>
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They start to hear  
The odd word here and there,  
Greetings and how are you?  
Is it a nice day today?  
And their Indian names.  
They get an Indian name. By then  
The ears are kind of perking up again,  
Going, "geez, you know,  
I've had to learn French  
Since grade three or four,  
And I want to learn this," they're saying.

I've gotten more braver to use it.  
More people saying greetings,  
How are you?, and they're hoping  
You are going to be feeling well.  
They say phrases, and it's  
More common to the ear now.  
So you exercise it more.  
Before you only could say  
A few words to your brothers and sisters  
That you grew up with...  
In the last ten years  
We come across a lot more people  
Wanting to speak it to you  
On a everyday basis.  
So, it's kind of nice.

The only way I do it is  
The way my Dad and Grandmother  
We used to do it, just to talk it,  
Speak it to the people.  
Oh, I took classes down at Stó:lō,  
But still will ask my mother  
For new words, new phrases.  
She's not always here with us;  
She lives in Terrace.  
She speaks the language fluently,  
The Sumas language.

She comes every three months or so,  
Stays the winter seasons,  
To make sure we carry on our culture.

to get out of the house."

Today, Xwelíxwiya makes a concerted effort to speak *Halq'éméylen*, "I do my best to exercise it every day." But, she not only exercises speaking *Halq'éméylen* everyday for the sake of speaking, but teaches others and instills in them a desire to also want to learn the language. In her efforts, she observes in their reaction, in their body language, and in their eyes that they want the language too, and that they would prefer their second language in school to be *Halq'éméylen* rather than the second language choices available to them.

Xwelíxwiya is thoughtful in how she transmits the language to others, careful to deliver it in small bites, using every opportunity to speak to learners again and again, understanding fully the value and power of repetition.

Oral transmission in a natural setting is

Xwelíxwiya's preferred manner of teaching the language to others, "by just talking to

She teaches us weaving, knitting,  
 Basket weaving, working with cedar bark,  
 Roots and herbs, the names,  
 The stories, the dancing.  
 She taught us so much through the years.  
 I didn't think it was learning anything,  
 Thought it was the way  
 Everybody was taught,  
 The way things were done.  
 She doesn't speak our language  
 To anybody up there,  
 But she teaches her husband.  
 He speaks fluent Tsimshian;  
 They teach each other.  
 They're really strong in themselves  
 And their culture.

Rewards? Hearing the little ones  
 Talk back to you,  
*Líchexwxwə éyo?*  
 And without me asking them,  
 Just popping it out themselves.  
 My son-in-law's talking to me too.  
 They get up and speak the language,  
 Things I've taught them.  
 My grandchildren are learning it,  
 And my children.  
 If they are not learning it that way,  
 They are doing it through the systems  
 In the school or in the community,  
 Sardis elementary.  
 The schools have got little teachers  
 From Stó:lō Shxwəlí  
 Going into the schools  
 Teaching one hour a week.  
 Or some way  
 They're getting a little taste.  
 It's planting a seed,  
 And all the rest is at Stó:lō Nation.  
 When they want more, it's there;  
 The seed has been there.  
 It just has to be watered, and it'll grow.  
 It's better than no seed.

the language to others, "by just talking to  
 them." She prefers speaking to writing and is  
 not too interested in learning lists of words.  
 She would rather learn and teach *Halq'eréyem*  
 using common everyday dialogue. She  
 expects learning will take place in this fashion,  
 "Then pretty soon they're using, they're  
 talking it. They start answering me back." In  
 her manner of teaching, Xwelíxwiya emulates  
 her dad and grandmother.

Xwelíxwiya sees growth in the community.  
 "They're getting the ears for it," she says, but  
 also recognizes that there are limited  
 opportunities for community members to  
 hear and learn it. *Halq'eréyem* is being taught  
 in some of the Native schools, but once the  
 children move into public schools, the  
 language is no longer accessible to them.  
 Xwelíxwiya notices too that once the children  
 reach their teens, "the ears kind of perking up  
 again." The language, which is gaining greater

My greatest challenge?  
 Learning it myself fluently,  
 An objective I haven't reached.  
 If I could succeed, it would bring  
 A big dream come true to the elders  
 That realized it was a dying culture,  
 Part of the culture,  
 The heartbeat of our culture.

I'm also trying to learn the education,  
 And having to choose.  
 I really thought about it,  
 Because you've asked me to join  
 The day-to-day program  
 With the language, the immersion.  
 I would be reaching a goal  
 That's just on stand-by  
 Before I started my education.  
 To put it off,  
 And yourself saying to me  
 That this is a once in a lifetime thing.  
 I would be kind of crazy to pass it up.  
 Might never reach that goal.

I feel I am a teacher.  
 I practice it everyday;  
 Try my best to teach other people.  
 I am starting a school,  
 A cultural school  
 Where we are going to be practicing  
 Cultural activities.  
 It's going to be in honor  
 Of my Dad and my Mom.  
 They're in my heart,  
 The cultural people in my family.  
 It makes me feel honored  
 That I could even think  
 About having a school for the culture,  
 For the people that want to learn.  
 And Eddie has told me,  
 If I don't gather the language,  
 We won't be able to say

favour than ever before, provides Xwelíxwiya  
 with more confidence to use it more too.

The greatest rewards for Xwelíxwiya, as with  
 all of the teachers, is hearing the language  
 spoken by the little ones, by relatives, and in  
 the community. Xwelíxwiya realized what  
*Halq'éréylem* exposure had on her, and as a  
 result, has learned that what little exposure  
 the children and others may be getting will  
 benefit them as well. "They're getting a little  
 taste," she says. This little taste of the  
 language, she fully expects will grow into a  
 craving to want to learn the language. The  
 analogy she uses is "planting a seed."

Xwelíxwiya has a dream, the same dream as  
 her dad, to create a movement to revive  
*Halq'éréylem* into a functional living language  
 once again. But her greatest challenge in  
 attaining that dream is gaining fluency in the  
 language for herself.

We're totally cultural.  
Because the basketry, the drumming,  
Dancing, the hunting  
Has all got to do with the language.  
It's the main source of Indian culture.  
I have a husband that will provide for me.  
I can put my education on the back burner  
For a year. It's not gonna hurt,  
Not going away.  
But you won't have this opportunity again.

If I knew three quarters of the language,  
I'd be there. But if I don't get that,  
Then it's going to be  
Putting a piece of the puzzle together,  
And it's going to take years  
To put it together.  
I carry the culture;  
I am the hereditary carrier of our family  
When my Mother leaves.  
She is in her middle seventies now;  
I will be the culture for our family.

It meant an awful lot to my Dad.  
It's in our blood,  
In our memory,  
A part of us.  
The seeds are being planted;  
It will take time.  
It's going to take another 30 years,  
Because we are a people,  
And excuse me,  
I'm just about ready to cry here...  
It was the same way  
They took it away from us.  
Our people are losing their heart.  
People that I love  
No longer use their self in here.  
They just use their head,  
Use money,  
No longer care about their families,  
About their people.  
All they care about is

Xwelíxwiya's analogy for the language is that  
it's "the heartbeat of our culture." During  
our talk, Xwelíxwiya shared her realization  
that the language is slipping away, its heart is  
beating faintly, and she sees a lifeline for that  
heart to beat more strongly in the offering of  
the immersion program. Here, she sees that  
her dream for *Halq'éméylen* revitalization may  
be realized, her dream for a cultural school  
that will truly be cultural can be realized  
through the language. "If we don't gather the  
language, we won't be able to say we're totally  
cultural," she says. Her proposed cultural  
school will be dedicated to her parents who  
strove to keep the *Halq'éméylen* language and  
*Stó:lō* cultural practices alive.

Xwelíxwiya's realization of the critical state of  
our language surfaces another realization, that  
is, the realization of the *st'áxem* forces that  
have affected our people so deeply. How  
long is it going to take to restore our

Putting a fence around their yard,  
 Making sure no one gets in.  
 That means people  
 Are losing who they are,  
 And they have won,  
 The people that have set out  
 For us to lose everything,  
 To become a lost people.  
 When I talk to the young people  
 In our language,  
 The few words that I can say to them,  
 It melts them,  
 Makes them soft,  
 Makes them feel something.  
 Because our world is so hard,  
 The English language is so hard,  
 It's got no heart.  
 Our people are becoming  
 Harder and harder, and  
 Pretty soon they won't have a heart.  
 It won't matter if they have a Indian name,  
 Know all the herbs, all the weavings  
 They think they have under their belt.  
 They'll just put it aside, and  
 Want to do something else with their life.

To become a balanced person,  
 Able to use your energy,  
 Your *sts'eláxwem*<sup>23</sup> power we call it,  
 [*sts'eláxwem* is 'experienced Indian spirit  
 dancer' from root *ts'eláxw* 'go into quieter  
 water' (Galloway, 2002 p.c.)]  
 You won't become a balanced person.  
 You will become a lost person.  
 You will always be brown, and  
 People will always ask you,  
 "Aren't you First Nation?," and  
 "Do you know your language?"  
 That's the first thing they ask you!  
 They don't say, "Do you weave?  
 Do you know how to knit?" They say,  
 "Do you know your language?"  
 Our people come from here

language? "Another 30 years," says  
 Xwelíxwiya, and the tears flow as she feels the  
 full force of the *st'áxem* effect upon our  
 language, our culture, our lives, "Our people  
 are losing their heart...losing who they are."  
 And what does it mean if we continue in this  
 vein? It means "they have won," and we  
 remain *st'áxem*. "You will always be brown,  
 and people will always ask you, 'Do you know  
 your language?'"

But we still have the language; though we are  
 a thread or a breath away from losing it. Yet  
 the belief is strong that it is not lost. "There  
 are a few people struggling to keep that little  
 bit warm... a few elders trying to keep the  
 language warm," says Xwelíxwiya. The  
 warmth may fulfill the missing piece of the  
 puzzle where Xwelíxwiya can find "the full  
 strength of my power."

Xwelíxwiya sees the language bring self-  
 esteem to those who speak it, sees "warmth

And we don't have our own language;  
We don't have our own schools.

You can go to Vancouver,  
And you see Chinese schools,  
East Indian schools, Korean schools,  
Japanese schools. Their people make sure  
Their children are still learning  
About who they are. And it makes me sad  
That our people don't do that,  
Don't think of themselves as important.  
There are a few people struggling  
To keep that little bit warm.  
We've got a few elders trying  
To keep the language warm  
So it can be learned still.  
And we are losing our elders.  
The ones teaching in Stó:lō Shxweli;  
They are ready to leave this world  
Anytime. These are the brave ones  
That are willing to share.

I know an awful lot of culture.  
It's taken 30 years of my life to learn  
The culture, seriously learning it.  
The other 20 years I learned it  
Just fly by night,  
Whatever my mom told me to do.  
Seriously, myself, I've been 30 years  
Learning the culture,  
And there's a huge piece missing,  
And that's the language.  
I can't seem to get  
The full strength of my power  
Until I learn the language.  
Maybe that's why I can't  
Get as good in my education  
As I would like to be, because  
I haven't finished what I started.  
When I get the language, I will be  
Practically complete.

I see the ones

esteem to those who speak it, sees "warmth  
and love" in its expression and sees that it  
"brings a different focus." Whatever she does  
in the language seems to fit, to resonate with  
her, "I'm so easygoing, can express who I  
really am." Xwelíxwiya's sense of  
responsibility for carrying the language and  
culture forward was instilled in her  
throughout her lifetime. It is no small matter.  
Her mission as a teacher will be completed  
with the inclusion of *Halq'emélem* in her  
repertoire of cultural knowledge.

Xwelíxwiya believes that a "rebirth" of our  
language can happen by reversing the  
direction toward death in exactly the same  
way it was taken away, "by having residential  
schools, but for the culture." She believes  
enough people can be committed, enough  
seeds have been planted, and that who we are  
as Stó:lō people is in us, even though our  
"human self doesn't know," and that we need

That can speak fluent Hulq'umi'num,  
That's the Island language.  
When they get up to talk,  
They strut.  
And I'll betcha they only got grade 2,  
But they've got such huge pride  
In who they are.  
They're as high as Mount Everest,  
So I know it brings self-esteem.  
You can see it.

When you know your language,  
You can express your culture  
In a way that the English language can't.  
In English it's too hard to express  
Who we are as First Nations people.  
But when you speak the language,  
It brings the warmth and the love  
To who we really are;  
It brings a different focus.

I feel that when I speak the language,  
We are reincarnated people.  
That's what our people believe.  
Who I was before,  
Gets happy in here, and I can feel it  
To the depths of my feet that they're  
Happy. The English language is hard.  
It makes me stand up stiff,  
Makes me stiff inside.  
I start to sweat.  
But when I do things from the culture,  
I'm so easygoing,  
Can express who I really am.

I am a junior elder.  
Soon it will be my responsibility  
As much as it is Aunt Rosaleen's  
Responsibility in her heart to teach it.  
It will become my responsibility  
As much as it has been hers and my Dad's.  
Young people have always  
Looked to the elders,

to go "back inside mother's womb and be  
reborn again." Hmm... A born again *Stó:lō*.

Because that's the way our people are,  
For the heartbeat of who they are.  
If I can't present them their deepest  
Feelings, and bring it forward  
So they can understand it,  
Then I'm not going to be the elder  
That I should be.  
It's been instilled in me since I was born;  
I've been waiting for the responsibility;  
I've been trained and groomed.  
I know there's a lot of people  
That haven't been trained,  
But they are training themselves.  
And I find them so awesome,  
Taking this initiative  
All on their own.  
They told us when I was a new dancer,  
"You'll be standing here one day  
When we're gone.  
You'll be expected to teach,  
Expected to teach what you know."  
I didn't just get it from my Grandparents;  
I got it from the Longhouse,  
As part of my training.

I made up my mind to take the language  
That you asked me to take.  
There's a piece of the puzzle I should get  
Before I think I'm near completed  
My mission as a teacher.  
I have the language partially, and  
Should have it as much as I can.  
Funny, it plopped right on my lap.  
I thought it really strange,  
Like a bucket of cold water  
When you offered it to me.  
Me, you're asking me?  
I went home and I told my husband;  
He wanted it. I looked at him.  
You want it?  
I know he does, but he needs to do more,  
Like with his painting and carving.  
He'll do anything to learn more



About the carving, drawing and painting.

My dad just passed away.  
It meant a lot to him,  
And means a lot to me.  
When he first started teaching it,  
I was his first student.  
Mary and Richard Malloway  
Who helped me come in the Longhouse,  
And old Ed Kelly, they all tried so hard  
To plant the seed in us.  
Now it's growing.  
They are saying, "Here it is."

It's our needle in a haystack  
That we have to find  
To sew ourselves back up again.  
Feels like a goose egg,  
Trying to pull it through a pinhole.  
If you plug away long enough,  
The hole will rip, oh well.  
And that's just exactly what we gotta do,  
Is bring birth to this again,  
Just like a baby tries to come through  
This little tiny thing of ours down there;  
It just has to burst through.

By having immersion,  
Having residential schools,  
But for the culture,  
The same way it was taken away.  
Open up a mission school at the army base,  
A place for everybody to go live  
That's a student, or anybody  
That wants to be committed  
To go there for a year, to  
Learn how to be cultural.  
Exactly the same way they took it away  
Is the same way we're going to get it back.  
I believe there's enough people  
That could be that committed,  
Because there been a lotta seeds planted.  
All these people who are of age now,

<p>Realizing the gap They have within themselves To find their identity, Have to go within and learn. It's like they know in here, But they're human self doesn't know. It's like going back inside mother's womb And being reborn again. It's going to be hard, It's not going to be easy.</p>	
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*Kwósel* Stella Pettis

*“...In my mind, I can do it.”*

**STELLA PETTIS**

January 9, 2001. At the Seabird Island Cultural Building on the Seabird Island Reserve.

Only time I heard the language,  
My aunt Mary used to talk  
In Halq'eméylem, or in Thomson  
When I was younger.  
My parents never spoke it, and  
I didn't understand it at that time.  
I started working on language in 1972,  
With the elders at Skowkale.  
Didn't start understanding  
Until I worked with the elders,  
Roy Point, Wilfred Charlie, Amelia Douglas,  
and Tillie.  
They used to get the proper way of  
Saying words from Charles Hill-Tout.  
What they were working on back then,  
I'd type up the words,  
And at the elders meetings,  
They'd record the proper way of saying it.

I tried writing it; always written  
It since 1972. But never tried to speak  
The language back then.  
It was different than today,  
Pronunciation of the words.  
The elders back then,  
Had the more higher language.  
When I was working,  
I really wanted to start learning it.  
Even today, I still can't speak it,  
Though I been working with it  
For a while.

I just need to be with an elder,

**Kwósel**

Kwósel has been part of the *Halq'eréylem* effort at Seabird Island Community School, and also participated in the *Stóló Shxwáli Halq'eréylem* language courses. Among the nine participants, I have had the least personal contact with Kwósel, though I have had interactions with her since I conducted my Masters degree research on the Seabird Island Community School in 1985-86. She agreed to meet with me at the Seabird Island Cultural Building. When I arrived, I was surprised to see that there were three people there. The situation was a little awkward, as I didn't expect to interview three people. The other two were *Tseloyóthelwaet* and Tyrone McNeil, both with whom I have had a great deal of contact surrounding the time of this research, particularly through my work with Stóló

<p>Keep hearing the language, Constantly. They spoke it then, But I just couldn't understand What they were saying. Now, when other people speak it, I can understand what they say. But I can't speak it. I keep praying, Giving myself another five years Where I'd become fluent, That's my goal. I practice with Tseloyóthelwet, Now maybe Ty.</p> <p>I wanted to start learning back in '72, Working with the elders. I worked a year with the elders, Then worked with Coqualeetza, Translating these tapes We did back in '72. We were so busy translating, I didn't really hear the elders speaking. Got back into the language in '78. Used to go to the elders meetings. That's one of the reasons I'm in the language; I want to learn. It's very important The kids learn their language, So they'll know who they are.</p> <p>All the elders I was working with Was Amelia Douglas, Tillie Gutierrez, Aunty Edna Bobb, Agnes Kelly, Susan Peters, all the ones that have died, Teresa Michelle, they're all my teachers. [Tillie Gutierrez is alive, continues to work with the language] When I was working at Coqualeetza, I came over and helped Aunty Edna Teach at the school here, When we still had the school At the old building.</p>	<p>Nation. I asked if all three wanted to be included in the interview. <i>Tseloyóthelwet</i> bowed out for the time being. It would have been great to have <i>Tseloyóthelwet</i> in my study, but I decided against including her simply because of time constraints. Nonetheless, the participants' testimonials have spoken volumes to her influence in the Halq'eméylem language revival efforts. Tyrone agreed to participate, and Kwósel did not object. So, I was fortunate to have a two-in-one deal. I interviewed them both at the same time; and they alternated answering each question. I then extracted what each shared to isolate their individual stories.</p> <p>Kwósel's early exposure to language included not only <i>Halq'eméylem</i>, but also Thompson, which was spoken by her aunt Mary. She was not exposed to the language in her home, as her parents did not speak it. But, Kwósel was involved in <i>Halq'eméylem</i> language work during</p>
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<p>That was in '78/'79 When I started.</p> <p>Tseloyóthelwet and I used to go Up to Chehalis and teach there. We used to go up and teach at Skwah. Where else did we teach? Chehalis, Skwah, Seabird, College, So it's been... Soowahlie...</p> <p>I teach here at Seabird, From nursery to grade 12; We speak every day. I been working with Seabird since '93, But not with the language At the time. I was a TA for kindergarten. It was in '98 I came back with the language.</p> <p>I enjoy doing the work, though it Depends on the day of the students. Some days it's easy going, Easy to teach. Other days they're bouncing off the wall, Can't get any work done. It has its ups and downs, Not just the young kids; It's the older ones, the high school kids.</p> <p>Some of the students say, "Why do I have to learn this language?" I tell them, "Well, it's part of our culture. We need to know our language; We'll know more what our culture is By learning our language. Some things in Halq'eméylem Can't be explained in English." That's what I tell them. One of the reasons They're coming to Seabird, is So they'll get the language and the culture.</p>	<p>the time of the Skulkayn Project the early '70s, working with the pioneers of Halq'eméylem language revival. "What they were working on back then, I'd type up the words," she said. Subsequently, Kwósel worked with the Coqualeetza Education Training Centre alongside many of the pioneer elders involved in Halq'eméylem language revival. In addition, she assisted her elder mentors conduct their teaching at various community venues. As a result of all the years Kwósel worked in the language, she learned to write in the language, but to her chagrin, did not master learning to speak it. Her early exposure to the language work inspired her to want to learn more, and her motivation for wanting to learn? "It's very important the kids learn their language so they'll know who they are." And, thus, her current role as a teacher serves that end.</p> <p>Kwósel's mastery of the language evolved</p>
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If they didn't want that, they  
Shouldn't be here at Seabird.  
I keep saying that every year.  
I tell them, "Well, if you don't want  
To take the language,  
You could always go to Agassiz."  
They say, "No, I'll stay here."  
They're trying  
To get out of learning the language.

I notice, even though  
They don't participate in the class,  
They pick up on what we teach them  
After a while.  
Teachers in the lower grades,  
The ones staying with us  
When we do the language,  
Are learning the language  
With the students.  
And if we're not there,  
They teach the kids the language.  
Those ones seem to be  
Into learning the language and songs.

We had the language  
In the community last year.  
Only four people that took it.  
Myself, Marian, Tina, she's an elder,  
And her daughter, Irene, were  
The ones coming to our classes.  
And Irene had foster kids, would  
Bring them every once in a while.  
That's the ones that would come  
For the night classes.  
There's people that signed up,  
Said they wanted to come and learn.  
We phoned them, said it was at this time;  
They just didn't show.  
It would be in the Band newspaper,  
And people would phone  
To let us know they're interested.  
People would come,  
Want something translated, and ask,

over the years from recognition of  
Halq'eméylem in its writing system to now  
where she can recognize the language aurally.  
She hopes to learn to speak *Halq'enéylem* one  
day, and gives herself a five-year window to  
achieve her goal. Her practice partner is  
*Tseloyóthelwet*, and now maybe Tyrone can be  
her partner too.

The challenges of teaching are daunting in the  
best of circumstances, requiring specialized  
knowledge and skill. Kwósel teaches  
*Halq'enéylem* to the children at the Seabird  
Island Community School. She has gained  
much knowledge from her mentors, and calls  
on her own resources and devices to deliver  
her teaching in the best way she knows how.  
Kwósel not only deals with the youthful  
exuberance of the kids, younger and older,  
when "they're bouncing off the walls," but  
consistently, year after year, she faces  
resistance from them, "Why do I have to

“You guys having night classes?”  
We said “yeah,” and they’d say,  
“Well, I didn’t hear anything about it.”

CDs will get the kids more interested  
In working with the language.  
They’re always into CDs.  
We need to develop more  
Computerized stuff with conversations  
They could use everyday.  
Every once in awhile,  
I speak to them in Halq’eméylem  
While they’re outside.  
I hope that when they’re outside,  
They’ll speak to each other,  
Or in a classroom,  
That it would just come naturally.

We have to do more tapes,  
More language masters.  
Get that in the classroom,  
So they could just go there and listen  
When they have free time,  
Or listen on cassette.

The ones taking the language courses,  
Seem to be the ones that use it most.  
It’s being used.  
I use it more with my family  
Than what I used to do before.  
Guess it’s because I really want  
To learn to speak it.  
When I’m walking, I  
Try to say things in Halq’eméylem,  
Translate the things that I know.  
Since Tseloyóthelwet came back  
That’s happening with me.  
I’m doing more translation on my own;  
She’s great inspiration to me.

It’s been in the school  
A certain time now;  
The community finally accepts it.

learn this language?” However, when  
presented with the option to stay and learn  
Halq’eméylem, or go to a non-First Nations  
school and not have to take it, they generally  
opt for Seabird. Kwósel responds eloquently  
to their rebellion, stating clearly the cultural  
importance of *Halq’eméylem* is in their lives.  
And even though the students in her class  
seem not to be listening, she observes that  
they are speaking Halq’eméylem on the  
playground and in the community.

Kwósel believes using modern technology to  
teach could provide more impetus for the  
students to learn. “CDs will get the kids more  
interested in the language. They’re always  
into CDs,” says Kwósel. Another challenge  
for Kwósel and the Seabird Island  
Community school will be to streamline the  
curriculum as the children become more  
fluent, and to incorporate a greater cultural  
component in the learning process.



<p>It's part of the school, Part of the culture. And maybe now, because the language Is a normal part of ceremony, Maybe some of them will start Learning the language, Give them more Motivation.</p> <p>My motivation is Seeing the students singing; Maybe they'll get doing something else. Hearing kids acknowledge you When you're out in the public, Speaking the language. They just come up and say, "Láw, Kwósel, Seldhímbexw" ["Hello, Star, How are you?"] Or they say other things In Halq'eméylem.</p> <p>For grade 8, I gave them something Monday, yesterday, and they said, "Well, we did it last year." Okay, They had to do the same again. I said, "What you're going to do at the end, You're going to be writing a poem Using these words." They get the same thing, But the activity is different. They didn't like the idea of Getting the same thing They got last year.</p> <p>That's it for the speakers, Once the elders are gone. It's up to the next generation, The ones that are learning. What we're getting now, though, That's not the proper way of saying it; That's how we learned how to say it. They can come help with the language, If we're not saying it right.</p>	<p>component in the learning process.</p> <p>Teaching Halq'eméylem to a captive audience such as the students at Seabird Island school is challenging enough. Finding willing learners from the community is another matter. "In the community last year, only four people that took it," says Kwósel. Why is Halq'eméylem renewal not happening on a larger scale? Is there simply too little interest, or is something else going on? How can Seabird Island bring more prominence to learning the language in the community? A spin off to teaching the language in the school is that the children inspire the adults to want to learn Halq'eméylem. Halq'eméylem use, through the children at the school, has become "a normal part of ceremony" at Seabird Island. Everyone loves to hear the children singing and speaking in Halq'eméylem. In all the work that Kwósel has been involved in, it is "seeing the students</p>
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<p>Well, they can come and see us.  We just hear it through the grape vine,  This is what's being said.</p> <p>We'll be just learning the basics  When students first start in school.  By the time they continue,  They will be learning different medicines,  How to prepare things.  We're going to have a smoke house here,  Learning how to prepare the fish,  What you have to do to can deer or elk.  That's what we're hoping to have here.  The basics is for the younger grades  Learning to speak the language.</p> <p>Where it'd be spoken  The way it used to be, an everyday thing  Like the elders were,  I don't think that would ever come.  In certain families, maybe,  But not in the community  Or within the nation,  Just in certain families.</p> <p>Anybody that's interested  In learning the language,  If they want a tape,  We just give them a tape.  We're not charging anything  For taking a tape,  Because they're interested  In learning the language.</p> <p>I'm going to do more translations  From Halq'eméylem to English,  Thinking in Halq'eméylem  More than in English.  When I'm walking it comes natural,  When I'm thinking things.  <i>Tseloyóbeluet</i> is an inspiration to me,  Is pushing me to, she doesn't know it,  To think in Halq'eméylem</p>	<p>singing,” and “hearing the kids acknowledge  you... <i>Láw, Kwósel, Sedhínchexwé</i>” that gives  her her motivation to continue working  toward Halq'eméylem language renewal.</p> <p>A recurring challenge the participants repeat  consistently is getting the language right,  “What we're getting now, though, that's not  the proper way of saying it.” To the  naysayers, Kwósel suggests, “They can come  help with the language if we're not saying it  right. They can just come and see us.” And  whether we get the language right or not,  Kwósel is not convinced that the language  will “be spoken the way it used to be, an  everyday thing.” Kwósel can attest to how  difficult learning Halq'eméylem can be,  having been involved in the language work  for so many years and yet cannot speak it with  a high level of fluency. However, Kwósel's  mentor and her inspiration, <i>Tseloyóbeluet</i>, put  her on to something wonderful, that is</p>
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<p>Instead of English.  I used to think in English  And then translate.  I need somebody like <i>Tseloyóthahuet</i>  So I can hear the language more,  Give me a boost.</p> <p>I can't speak it,  But in my mind I can do it.  I find it easier  To do it in my head.</p>	<p>inspiring her to a new approach to her  knowledge of the language, “to think in  <i>Halq'emélem</i> instead of English,” a kind of  reverse assimilation process.</p>
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*T'it'elem Spá:th* Eddie Gardner

***“We have a beautiful dream.”***

**EDDIE GARDNER.**

November 30, 2000. At Eddie’s home,  
Sleepy Hollow, Cultus Lake B.C.

In my vision  
To move to more fertile soil,  
Things looked good for me there,  
Really good.  
My teacher, *Sy̓wæ*, gave me a name  
At the time of my vision quest,  
- Walks in the Sun Singing Bear.

When I came home,  
People were telling me  
Their Halq’eméylem names;  
I wanted to have a name in my language.  
Went to see the elders.  
Told them my story,  
How I got my name.  
They shortened it to Singing Bear,  
*T’ít’elem Spá:th*;  
That’s my name now.  
Announced my *Xwélmexw* name  
At the Charlie longhouse  
And in *Yakwəkwioose*.  
*Tixwətel*, Kelsey Charlie, told me,  
“You have a *Xwélmexw* name now,  
It’s time to announce it.”  
Everybody in the Fraser Valley longhouses  
Acknowledges me as  
*T’ít’elem Spá:th*.  
The elders *Tseloyóthelwet*, *Yómilot* and  
*Ts’ats’elcxwót* gave me my name.

It was so good to come home,  
To feel welcome amongst my people,  
Part of the Stó:lō  
As a *Xwélmexw*,

**T’ít’elem Spá:th**

We met for our talk at T’ít’elem Spá:th’s  
home in Sleepy Hollow, at Cultus Lake.  
T’ít’elem Spá:th and I have a very special  
relationship in that he is my brother. So,  
naturally, some of his story will be similar to  
mine, while his telling of the story, of course,  
is from his own unique experiences. T’ít’elem  
Spá:th, I and our large family were whisked  
away from *Stó:lō* territory when we were  
young children, and gradually, most of us  
returned to live in B.C. T’ít’elem Spá:th, after  
a lengthy period of longing to be in his  
hometown, returned to his *Stó:lō* roots only a  
few years ago. During his time “at home”  
T’ít’elem Spá:th developed a strong passion  
for learning *Halq’eméylem* and became a strong  
promoter of the language in *Stó:lō* territory.  
His enduring passion led him to believe in “a  
beautiful dream” for *Halq’eméylem* language.

With a *Xwélməxw* name.  
That made me proud.

Always had a keen interest  
To learn my language,  
Since I was a kid.  
Used to listen to words  
Dad spoke in Halq'éméylem.  
He loved saying the few words  
He knew in our language.  
Would say, "How's your *méxwəya?*"  
And he'd laugh. We'd ask,  
"What does that mean?" He'd say,  
"That's your belly button."  
We'd run around asking each other,  
"How's your *méxwəya?*"  
We was kids,  
Thought that was pretty funny.

At the table he would ask,  
"*A létsa Sephl,*" and that means,  
"Where's the bread?" After hearing him  
Say that so many times,  
Got to saying that all the time too.  
He would look at us, and say,  
"You know what?  
You're a *the'it Xwélməxw*," and I'd say,  
"What does that mean?" and he'd say,  
"Means you're a re-e-eal Indian.  
That's what you are."  
So it always peaked my interest,  
When I was a kid.  
Wanted to learn more,  
But Mom and Dad didn't know  
The language.

When I came back home,  
Working at Stó:lō Employment Services,  
I made friends with quite a few Stó:lō.  
It was a really good time;  
A new movement was afoot  
To bring back our language.  
They were selected people who

beautiful dream" for *Halq'éréylem* language  
revival.

When T'it'elem Spá:th moved to B.C., he  
lived in Lytton before moving "to more  
fertile soil." It was during his stint in Lytton  
that he received his name, *Walks in the Sun  
singing Bear*, on a vision quest. Though closer  
to home in Lytton, T'it'elem Spá:th longed to  
live in *Stó:lō* territory, in *S'ólh Téréxw*. For  
many of us, learning our *Halq'éréylem*  
language is a coming home coming of sorts,  
home to our roots, to *S'ólh Téréxw*.

When Walks in the Sun Singing Bear finally  
came home, he listened to people introduce  
themselves to him with their *Halq'éréylem*  
names. While he was happy with the name he  
acquired through his vision quest, Walks in  
the Sun Singing Bear now wished for a  
*Halq'éréylem* name. What's in a name? A  
*Halq'éréylem* name is a way of distinguishing  
us as *Stó:lō* people, a name in our own

Were expected to learn the language, Become  
teachers, and bring  
The language back into our community.  
It was a huge challenge.  
The deeper into it they got,  
The harder it seemed to get.

We don't have many opportunities  
To practice the language.  
Aren't many speakers.  
Our language is beautiful,  
But it's a real challenge  
To learn it fluently.  
We have very few tools,  
Few resources to learn with.  
I kinda picked that up  
Intermingling with relatives and friends  
In the Stó:lō Nation.

We decided to have a name  
For our organization,  
Our part of Stó:lō Nation.  
We consulted with Coqualeetza  
About a name for our service.  
Wanted to call it New Beginnings.  
Asked what New Beginnings meant.  
The elders told me *Chou̓y̓es*.  
We acknowledged Pípte for that name.  
He had consulted the elders,  
And we became *Chou̓y̓es*.  
We were working in a little house  
On the Coqualeetza ground at that time.  
Got a big sign, *Chou̓y̓es*,  
Had a grand opening of our service.  
We invited all the people  
From the Stó:lō Nation,  
And all our funders were there.  
I was so happy to say,  
"This is *Chou̓y̓es*, New Beginnings."  
We made a good start with our language;  
I wanted to keep doing something  
To cultivate greater interest  
In learning our language.

us as *Stó:lō* people, a name in our own  
language. And so, *Walks in the Sun Singing Bear*  
went to the elders to acquire a *Halq'eny̓em*  
name. He received one, and was instructed in  
the proper protocol associated with acquiring  
a new name, which *Walks in the Sun Singing  
Bear* abided. Now, "Everybody in the Fraser  
Valley longhouses acknowledges me as  
T'it'elem Spá:th," he says proudly, with a  
feeling of *smelá:lh*. T'it'elem Spá:th was finally  
home.

T'it'elem Spá:th's early recollections of the  
language were similar to mine, which  
consisted of the few words our dad spoke in  
*Halq'eny̓em*, "*m̓x̓weya*," "*x̓w̓elm̓x̓w̓*" "*al̓tsa  
sepl̓l̓*" and stayed with us throughout our  
lifetime. Though T'it'elem Spá:th craved to  
hear more in the language, both he and I and  
our family would be denied this privilege.  
Our parents did not know the language. In  
this sense, we were relegated to *st'áx̓em* status.

<p>Yómalot later told me that New Beginnings Translated as <i>Xarus Skwóyxthet</i></p> <p>We know what intent the government had To assimilate First Nations people. Seemed like every time I learned a new word in our language, I could smile and say, “Aha, they didn’t take that Word away from me, boy.” It stirred something inside me That became quite emotional. Our language is our Culture, Culture is our language. That phrase has A very powerful impact. As First Nations people, we need to Exhaust every possibility to restore Our language, So we can stand up and say, “You didn’t win. You couldn’t assimilate us. We’re here to stay.”</p> <p>I got a real passion for the language, Wanted to learn more and more. A lot of mixed feelings I have with the language. Everybody talks about The race against time. The elders are dwindling, Few left who know the language.</p> <p>There’s fighting going on about The way you pronounce words In the Fraser Valley. They say certain words over in <i>Sts’a’iles</i>, That’s a different way than <i>Ts’ekwáyew</i> people say it This side of the River. Then there are other different dialects. If you talk to some elders, and They don’t quite understand you, Think you’re not pronouncing right;</p>	<p>T’it’elem Spá:th was happy when he came home and discovered “a new movement afoot to bring back our language,” and soon came to realize the critical state it was in - few speakers, few tools, few resources. T’it’elem Spá:th was determined to find ways to uplift the language, to give it greater prominence in our community. One way was through utilizing the powerful mechanism of naming, providing a public identity marker for his program, a process that serves to distinguish us as <i>Stó:lō Halq’eréylen</i> people. After consulting the proper authorities and participating in the proper protocol, T’it’elem Spá:th was happy to say, “This is <i>Chowiyes</i>, New Beginnings.” This gesture was meant not only for self-identification, but the name was directed at counteracting the <i>st’áxcem</i> effect in our community. Chowiyes was later corrected by Yómalot as <i>Xarus Skwóyxthet</i>, new doings.</p>
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<p>It gets frustrating.  I get very happy, very proud  That more and more people  Recognize and acknowledge  We need to choose one language,  One dialect, and to stick to it, and  Respect, at the same time,  All the dialects.  If people say it a little differently  Here and there, so what?  At least, we can all understand,  And that's the main thing.  We have a beautiful dream.</p> <p>Political lip service is given  By the political masters.  I get a sense it's lip service.  For their own reasons they feel  They are too old to learn,  Give their priorities elsewhere.  You're never too old.  I'm almost 55 now,  Still learning the language,  And a lot of the political leaders  Are younger than I am.  They should make a greater effort  To pray in our language.  Other First Nations have somebody  Who can stand up and pray  In their own language.  When they look around here,  There's nobody to pray.  Very few of our political leaders  Pray in our language.  They feel a little uncomfortable about that.  When they have somebody who knows  How to pray in our language,  They're proud to call them forward,  Whether it's myself, <i>Houláxia</i> (Eunice Ned),  <i>Siyámálexw</i> (Joe Aleck) any of the elders,  Like <i>Yómalot</i> (Rosaleen George), <i>Ts'ats'alexwót</i>  (<i>Elizabeth Hertling</i>), and <i>Tseloyóthelwet</i> (<i>Shirley Julian</i>).</p>	<p>T'it'elem Spá:th felt and understood deeply  what the government had done in its attempt  to assimilate First Nations people into the  settler Canadian society. The most powerful  mechanism for implementing the process was  to take away the language, which aside from  the disease epidemics, was the most  devastating assault to the Stó:lō culture and  people. And now, for T'it'elem Spá:th, every  word that he utters in <i>Halq'eréyem</i> affects him  deeply, "It stirred something inside me that  became quite emotional." The realization of  what happened to us within the assimilation  process rings louder and clearer when we re-  connect with that which was taken away, re-  connecting with what we were missing all of  our lives.</p> <p>With the connection to our language comes  the elation of finding ourselves, with a  growing affection for all it represents, our  identity, our culture, a way of saying, "You</p>
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<p>It is precious To be able to pray to the creator In our language.</p> <p>It makes me feel I'm a living part of the culture, Every time I learn A few words in our language. This is me, living An important part of our history, Part of a turning point Against the assimilation forces. The best way to do that Is to go to your language. That's what it means to me.</p> <p>Here I am. I've come back To my own territory. My mother is a <i>Xwélməxw</i> Her roots go back to the Skwah Band. Our grandfather on our mother's side, His mother was Mary. Mary's name was <i>Shiatox</i>; Nobody knew her maiden name. I thought it was pretty cool that everybody Could remember her <i>Xwélməxw</i> name, Not her Christian name. It put a complication in getting Our status back.</p> <p>I'm learning the language Any way, shape or form. Taken level I to IV in Halq'eméylem, Audited a linguistics course, and that Was pretty effective. Brent Galloway was good, Teaching through story telling. I see our elders as often as possible.</p> <p>Had the pleasure yesterday Of picking up <i>Yómalox</i>, Bringing her out to a funeral. On the way there I asked her,</p>	<p>didn't win. You couldn't assimilate us. We're here to stay." And at the same time that we feel this elation, this passion, we're faced with another anxiety, "The race against time." We worry about losing our precious few elders who have fluency in our language during this early time in our revivalist work in our language, our culture, and our identity.</p> <p>T'ít'elem Spá:th is rightly concerned for our language, and is concerned that the "political masters" of <i>Stó:lō</i> Nation are not paying enough attention to the language. He is confident that if they give enough attention to learning the language themselves, they can be powerful role models. The few people who have enough of the language to share prayers, a common protocol in First Nations gatherings, are called upon by the political leaders to do for them what he believes they should be able to do for themselves. "When they look around here, there's nobody to</p>
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How you say when you're praying  
 To *Chídelh Síyám*,  
 "Thank you for the rain and the water."  
 She said, "*Chídelh Síyám*,  
*Ch'íthónetsel, xuelám te slhénexw qas te qá.*"  
 Oh, that was really good.  
 Now, I was able  
 To pick that up and say,  
 "*Ch'íthónetsel xuelám te syáquem, qas te béyexwi*"  
 That means, Thank you, Creator,  
 For the sun and fire.  
 I took it a little further and said,  
 "*Ch'íthónetsel xuelám te térxew*," which is  
 Thank you, good Creator, for the earth.  
 When you go see the elders, and  
 Pick up certain things,  
 You can do mixing and matching.  
 I learn the language that way.  
 Every chance I get,  
 I talk with people who know the language,  
 Especially the elders.  
 I asked the elders to translate  
 Components of the Medicine wheel,  
*St'élnexw St'élákw*,  
 Words like north, south, east and west  
 Into Halq'eméylem, and that was good.  
 I make up songs in our language,  
 Made two of them up.  
 One was *Stálo Shxweli Wí Yáha*.  
*Ts'ats'elxwót, Yómalot, Tseloyóthakwet* and  
*Xwiyolenót* (Tillie Gutierrez) contributed to  
 Translating that song into Halq'eméylem.  
 Music is a way to learn the language.  
 People like it.

I arrived at being able to  
 Express myself in the language.  
 Few of our people speak the language.  
 They get the impression  
 I know more than I do,  
 Which is really funny.  
 They highly respect me for it.  
 I'm looked to to say prayers,

pray," he says of the leaders.

T'it'elem Spá:th reiterates his affection for the language. It has a strong appeal for him in contraindicating the *st'áxem* effect of the government's assimilation goal. He talks with great pride of his discovery that our great grandmother, *Shiatax*, could not be remembered by her given Anglo-name, only by her *Halq'eméylem* name. With this discovery, T'it'elem Spá:th can imagine a time when *Halq'eméylem* thrived, and harbours a "beautiful dream" that it can happen again.

Our biggest struggle is acquiring the language and being able to use it in the most usual circumstances of our lives, to be able to meet one another and after greetings and salutations, to then be able to interact in a simple conversation about what is going on in our lives, to talk about our thoughts and ideas. T'it'elem Spá:th approaches this sort of task, taking up every opportunity to learn

Thanking the cooks for the meal,  
Thanking the creator.  
They ask me to bless the meeting  
I know how to do that in our language.  
They see me as a leader for that.

I promote the language.  
Encourage our staff to take it, and  
Quite a few of them do.  
We've included Halq'eméylem  
In all our programs.  
The little taste they get  
Stirs some people  
To register for language courses.  
The more that happens the better.

A lot of people like  
The way I pronounce words.  
I really listen to the elders,  
Always listen very carefully.  
When I teach people the language,  
I say clearly in their ears,  
How to pronounce something,  
Keep repeating it until  
I sense they're picking it up.  
They appreciate that,  
Notice the care that I take  
To pronouncing the words.  
I test myself with the elders,  
And if they understand,  
It makes me feel really good.

They're asking for people  
To sing in our language.  
Never had that before.  
When I first came back,  
Walking Stó:lō Nation grounds,  
I didn't know how to speak  
Halq'eméylem at all,  
Didn't hear the language.  
I was drumming and singing  
In the Coqualeetza longhouse, and  
*Tseloyó'behuet* came and asked,

task, taking up every opportunity to learn  
something that can be useful, increasing his  
repertoire of *Halq'eméylem* with words that he  
will plan to use in his *Halq'eméylem* speaking,  
prayers and songs. "I'm learning the language  
any way, shape or form," says T'it'elem  
Spá:th.

If T'it'elem Spá:th is diligent in acquiring the  
language for his own uses, he is equally  
diligent in finding opportunities to transmit  
the language so others can learn. He  
transmits the language through prayers and  
protocol; he gives the participants in the  
employment and training programs that he  
oversees a "little taste" of the language, and  
shares the language in opportunities where  
anyone will lend an ear. T'it'elem Spá:th cares  
dearly about the language and takes care in  
how he acquires and transmits it, care that  
the language is pronounced correctly, care to  
provide repetition until those who have lent

“Do you know how to sing  
 In your language?”  
 “No,” I said.  
 “You don’t?”  
 She looked at me, and shook her head.  
 Boy, did that ever floor me.  
 Thought, God, you know,  
 I should learn my language.  
 I heard her singing in the language,  
 And other people who were  
 Learning the language.  
 Heard some tapes.  
 My golly, I got to get out there  
 And learn the language.

As I got into the language,  
 I saw quite a few people  
 Registering for it.  
 Pretty soon there were lots of people  
 In the language,  
 Going through levels I,II and III,  
 With a burning desire  
 And a passion to learn.  
 All that effort paid off.  
 Now you walk the Stó:lō Nation grounds,  
 You hear “*Láw, Líhexwæ éyo,*”  
 Hí, how are you?  
 Never heard that before.  
 That’s awesome.

In the Stó:lō communities,  
 You hear the language much more now.  
 Big house talk, you will hear,  
 “*Léwcha xwełám te syóys me í è.*”  
 [You are asked to witness the work that is  
 done here today.]  
 Nice to hear it in the longhouses.  
 In the street sometimes,  
 When I see my friends,  
 They look at me and say “*Láw.*”  
 Even on the phone,  
 People are saying our greetings  
 In our language.

an ear can pick it up and use it for themselves.  
 And if the fluent elders understand him and  
 approve how he speaks, “Makes me feel really  
 good.”

And what inspires T’ít’elem Spá:th to pursue  
 the language with such passion and diligence?  
 The desire was already in his heart to want to  
 learn our language, but the little messages  
 from his elder mentor, *Tseloyóthelwæt*, would  
 provide just the right cataclysmic response to  
 nudge him on to forge ahead with a greater  
 energy and passion than otherwise might have  
 been the case. “Do you know how to sing in  
 your language,” says *Tseloyóthelwæt*, and shakes  
 her head incredulously at T’ít’elem Spá:th’s  
 negative response. T’ít’elem Spá:th  
 determines, “My golly, I got to get out there  
 and learn the language.”

Another sharing from *Tseloyóthelwæt* gets to the  
 core of T’ít’elem Spá:th’s rebellion of sorts, a  
 stab in the heart from which he heals himself

That's really good.

The challenge is daunting,  
A lot of work to do  
To make our language functional  
In the communities;  
We can do it.  
What inspires me most is our elders  
Who dedicated their life  
To getting the language back.  
There's young people  
Inspired by the elders to learn.  
Our language. *Houláxia, Tiále, T'owkómót,  
Koyálenít,*  
And quite a few more  
Got a very strong passion for the language.  
That gives me hope.  
This new fleet of people  
Will inspire others to follow.  
I remain optimistic.  
I refuse to be pessimistic.  
Our dream will come true.

A multipronged approach is needed;  
It's got to be in the schools,  
A strong thrust in the community.  
We need to get our adults learning,  
So when the kids go home,  
They have somebody to practice with.  
It will take a strong commitment  
From the political leaders  
To learn the language themselves.  
It'll take marshalling resources  
To keep our language alive.  
Communication, communication,  
Communication in our language,  
In music, in art, in storytelling, in prayer,  
All those things.  
We have to modernize our language.  
Our elders are doing their best  
With our linguist to make headway on that.  
It's going to take a strong commitment  
By those involved now.

stab in the heart from which he heals himself

with every word he utters in the language,  
with the gentle encouragement from the  
elders, and with his songs and prayers.

*Tseloyáwhelwæt* shared the arrogant words of  
Pierre Elliot Trudeau, "If you're *Stó:ló*, speak  
to me in your language." "It shook me up,"  
says T'ít'elem Spá:th. If you know the history  
of how the language was stripped from  
Aboriginal people all across this land, those  
words from Trudeau could feel like the stab  
of a dagger in your heart, with an added twist.  
"Somebody like Trudeau can be provocative,"  
says T'ít'elem Spá:th, "but they didn't win the  
whole thing." And I am surprised at the place  
of calm and centeredness with which my  
brother speaks about this affront made by  
Trudeau, while I feel my own blood curdle at  
his very arrogant words. T'ít'elem Spá:th has  
arrived at this place of peace within himself,  
safe at home in his homeland, in his culture  
and language, in *S'ólh Ténéxcw*

<p>These people are inspired, With genuine passion for the language; They're not quitters.</p> <p>It's hard to become fluent; I can take the language in small bites. I have to prepare for retirement, Have to keep my job. If I took the immersion, An expectation would be To teach the language as a job. It doesn't seem like there are Many jobs out there For teaching the language; That's a problem. I pick up the language quite well, Love learning. It's just a matter of time; Have to be creative.</p> <p>What motivates me is my elders, What they have done. They are excellent role models. What motivates me is to see Many of us truly dedicated To the language. We don't have legions; There are only a few, and I'm one of them. It's a dream; it's our culture; It's who we are. It will tell the residential school system You lost. You didn't win. We're here to stay.</p> <p>It's the way we express ourselves. The way we relate To our territory, our land. Our culture is our land, Our language is connected to that.</p> <p>Tseloyóthelwet told us Pierre Trudeau said, "If you're Stó:lō, speak to me In your language." At that time,</p>	<p>and language, in <i>S'ólh T'éréxw</i></p> <p>T'ít'elem Spá:th's "beautiful dream" is coming to pass, albeit slowly. The language is being spoken and heard in classrooms, in programs, in the longhouses, in <i>Stó:lō</i> communities, among friends, on the phone, "People are saying our greetings in our language. That's really good." This is the payoff, and T'ít'elem Spá:th can take credit for his part in supporting the movement. Despite recognizing all the work that needs to be done, T'ít'elem Spá:th remains inspired by the elders, and by the other people who have a passion for the language that equals his own. "I remain optimistic... Our dream will come true," says T'ít'elem Spá:th.</p> <p>To keep the language going, it's going to take, "communication, communication, communication in our language," in all sorts of media and situations. It's a tough place to be to determine how one can achieve one's</p>
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Few people could speak.  
It shook me up.

I thought of the movement  
In Quebec to separate,  
To protect their language.  
There are six million of them,  
They have a written language,  
Millions of books,  
A mother country, France,  
A long history of the language,  
You can see their language on T.V.,  
In theatre, in the multimedia.  
And yet, they feel threatened  
That their culture will disappear.  
They don't want to be Anglicized.  
They want their French identity.  
One needs to speak French, to  
*Parlais Français*, to work in Quebec.

It makes me sad, we don't have  
A requirement, where  
To work for the Stó:lō Nation,  
You have to learn Halq'eméylem.  
We're not there yet.  
When we get a critical mass  
Interacting and speaking the language  
In the multimedia  
In our territory,  
That's where we need to be  
To really express ourselves,  
Live our culture.

Somebody like Trudeau  
Can be provocative. Here we are,  
After a few hundred years  
Of effort to assimilate us.  
It failed.  
They can celebrate themselves,  
I suppose, a measure of success;  
We can regret they made ground  
In assimilating us. But they didn't  
Win the whole thing.

be to determine how one can achieve one's  
dream, at least for T'it'elem Spá:th, who in his  
mid life is concerned for his future and for his  
family. How much can one sacrifice in this  
day and age for the sake of our culture, for  
the sake of our language? T'it'elem Spá:th is  
concerned for the practical realities of a  
livelihood, of being employed in order to  
maintain that livelihood. At this time,  
pursuing a career teaching the Halq'eméylem  
language is not a secure choice, in T'it'elem  
Spá:th's estimation.

And what does *Halq'eméylem* mean to T'it'elem  
Spá:th? First, it's the affective quality that he  
observes when it is spoken, "It's amazing. It  
captivates people... People feel it, respect it."  
Second, is a deeper understanding of a Stó:lō  
worldview, "A worldview is important. We  
can appreciate what that means when we  
become more fluent in the language." Third,  
it's part of what makes us *Xwélmexw* and



In a recent gathering,  
 This young friend of mine, Willie Charlie,  
 Was asked to MC  
 For a language meeting.  
 He felt humble  
 Being an MC for the language;  
 He doesn't speak the language.  
 People look at that,  
 And when they begin learning  
 The language, it instills self-worth,  
 Self-pride in their heritage.  
 It makes a big difference  
 When somebody can pray  
 In their language.  
 It's amazing. It captivates people.  
 People, who know how to pray  
 In their language  
 Get recognition, encouragement.  
 Means something  
 More powerful than just praying  
 In a second language.  
 People feel it,  
 Respect it.

When you speak your language,  
 The words you speak  
 Originate from a territory,  
 A social/political collective  
 Existing for thousands of years.  
 We've been here for 9,000 years.  
 The collective force here  
 Has a world outlook that can only  
 Be expressed in our language.  
 How the people relate  
 To the natural world, to the fish,  
 Birds, mountains, fire and water,  
 All from a specific worldview.  
 Language brings that out.  
 A worldview is important.  
 We can appreciate what that means  
 When we become more fluent  
 In the language.

T'it'elem Spá:th will assert his *Xwélmæw*-ness  
 as long as he can breath a word of  
*Halq'ém̓ylen* to prove it. "It isn't wiped off  
 the face of the earth as long as I know how to  
 speak a few words... It's not going to be lost,"  
 he says.

Our legends in the language  
Express our worldview,  
And you don't get the entire picture  
By the translations that are given.  
It takes a long time  
To get the accurate meaning  
Of what the legend is about.  
It is a specific worldview  
Passed on by all those generations.  
That's my take on it.

Other things make us *Xwélnexw*  
Go to the longhouse,  
There's spiritual dancers,  
There are songs; drums continue to beat;  
There's our history.  
Once a language dies,  
So much is lost; It's quite frightening.  
People sense that loss; it's real.  
I feel it every day.  
It feels like you lost something precious  
That's so close to you, part of you,  
A part of your spirit.  
It can make me sick to know how  
Assimilation can be that strong,  
To wipe out a large part of our culture.  
I feel a big sense of loss.

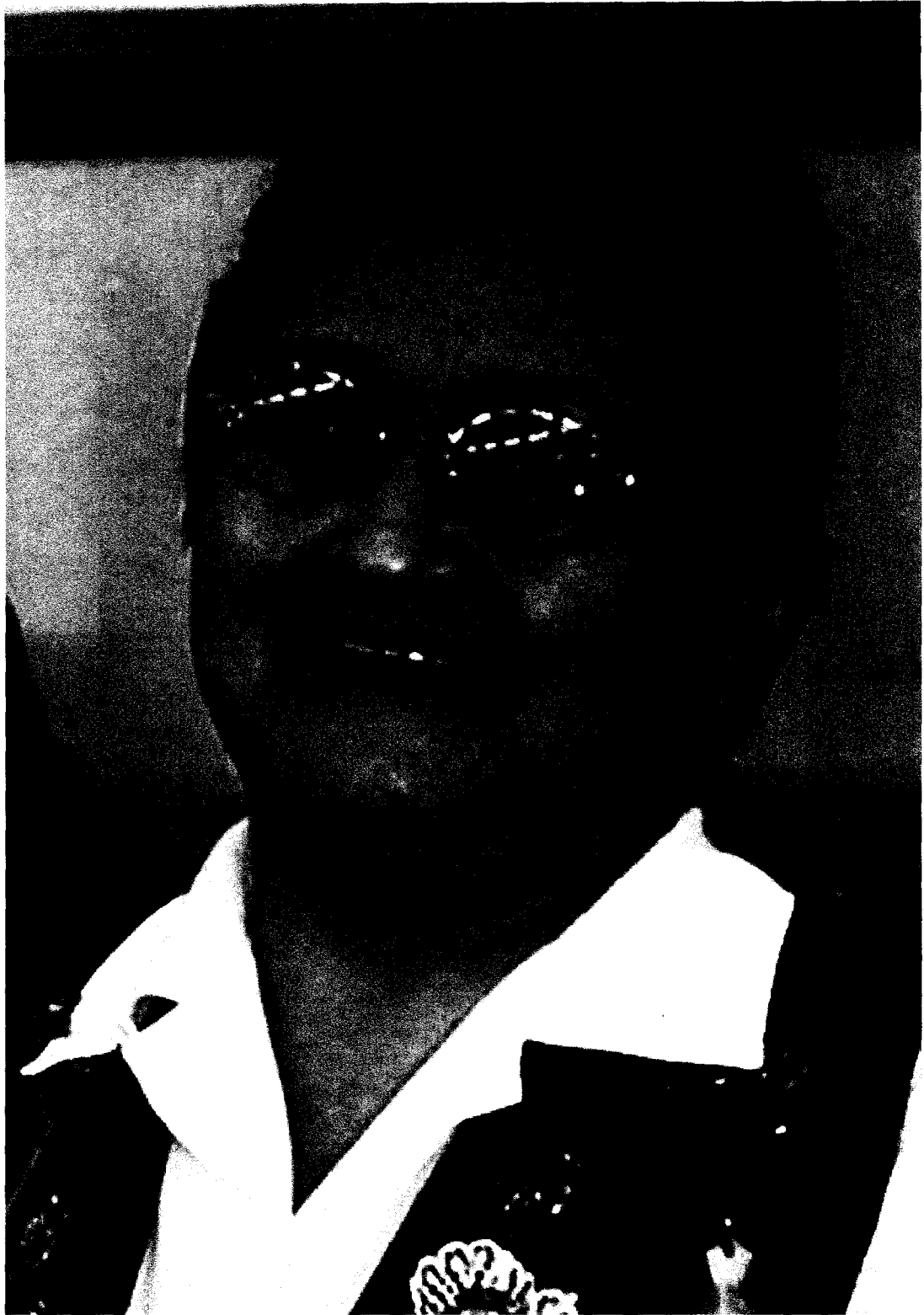
I refuse to be pessimistic,  
Refuse to give in. I am here to say,  
"It isn't wiped off the face of the earth."  
As long as I know how to speak  
A few words, and continue to learn,  
It's not going to be lost.  
I'll do what I can to pass on  
What little I know, and so will others.  
That's the way it is.  
*Éwe*, lose the language.

This talk reinforces my feelings  
About the language, to stay with  
Positive and like-minded people.  
We gravitate together, and

Acknowledge each other.  
It makes me appreciate them more.  
We talk about the race against the clock,  
The enormous challenge  
To bring our language together.  
It makes me emotional,  
Pervades my whole soul and my spirit.  
It has a very big impact.  
All those thoughts and feelings  
Flood back to me,  
Those moments when I think about  
Losing those precious elders of ours  
Who speak the language fluently.  
I think about those times  
When I had some free time, and  
Could have went to see Yómalot,  
Sat down and had tea with her to  
Learn more of the language, and  
Winded up doing other things.  
Then it hits you like a ton of bricks,  
The awesome responsibility  
Left with the few of us  
Who know a little bit of the language.

I see a spark of hope that  
I can get close to fluency before I go,  
One of my missions in my life.  
That's what drives me,  
Keeps me going, reminds me  
Of some of the work  
I'm going to do.  
I'm with a new company,  
*Téréxw Shxweli*,  
Means 'life spirit of the earth,'  
My partner, Renee Peter,  
Carries and loves the language.  
The *Téréxw Shxweli* learning centre  
Wants to teach our culture, our language  
To the community people.

*Tset hke wstex w te sqweltset.* [We hold our  
language high.]



*Épelel Evelyn Pennier*

*“just going to teach my little guy.”*

**EVELYN PENNIER**

November 10, 2000. At the interviewer’s office at the Coqualeetza site.

Épelel is my Halq’eméylem name.  
My home community is Skowlitz.  
I’m a single parent,  
Have five children,  
Nine grandchildren, and  
Raising another boy, five years old.

I used to hear the odd word  
Here and there from my mom  
Before going to school.  
But she never did teach us  
How to speak the language.  
She’d tell me what a cat was,  
You know, *píks*, or a dog, or a potato.  
Wouldn’t say any sentences  
Or anything like that.  
I was sent to Residential school;  
I was 8.  
Got a little wee bit exposure  
To the language. Yeah,  
Just a wee bit.

I never actually thought  
It was another language.  
Guess to me it was just a different way  
That mom said things, you know.  
She called these things different  
Than the English way.  
I didn’t know it was Halq’eméylem.

In the early ‘70s,  
Somebody started teaching  
Halq’eméylem at our Band Office.  
I went and took a few lessons,

**Épelel**

Épelel and I met at my office at *Stó:lō* Nation.

She was the first co-researcher to participate in the series of talks for my study. Épelel, a young elder, represents her community, Skowlitz on *Stó:lō* Nation’s *Lálen̓ Ye Selyól̓exw̓e*, House of Elders. My first introduction to Épelel was in the linguistics classes offered by *Stó:lō Shxw̓el̓i*. She was quiet and shy, and had a really good-natured subtle humour about her. Épelel did not hesitate to be involved in my study, and I was delighted that she agreed. We scheduled about an hour and a half for our meeting, and Épelel indicated that she wanted to leave at the scheduled time. I didn’t quite expect so little time for our talk. Usually, the whole process takes about three hours. Nonetheless, we discussed many aspects of her experience

<p>Not that many.  Then after awhile  I just got too busy...  Thought, well, that's supposed  To be our language,  Maybe I should learn it.  Guess my heart wasn't in it  At the time.  Nothing stuck.</p> <p>Then three years ago  I saw a notice come in  From the Band office.  They were having Halq'eméylem classes  Over here at Stó:lō Nation.  I sat down and thought,  This would be a good thing,  You know, to learn the language,  My Mom's language, I said to myself.  That's when I started.  Well, my father's isn't different,  It's the same.</p> <p>I felt it important,  Hardly anybody I knew  Was speaking Halq'eméylem.  Only time I ever heard it is  When I was with elders.  And the elders would speak  Only to each other  In the language.  I thought to myself,  Oh that would be neat,  To sit there and listen  And know what they're saying.  I think it was important,  A part of our culture,  Knowing who we are as a people,  To speak our own language.  I can understand some  If they don't speak too fast.  I need to listen more.</p>	<p>with the language in the time we had.</p> <p>Épelel introduced herself using her  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> name, what community she  came from and talked about her family. <i>Stó:lō</i>  people are adopting <i>Halq'eméylem</i> names more  now than before, and doing so with an  attached pride. "Épelel's" name is Evelyn  <i>Halq'eméylemized</i>, translating Evelyn using the  Halq'eméylem orthography. This practice is  commonly accepted and does not preclude  someone from receiving a true <i>Halq'eméylem</i>  name at another time.</p> <p>Épelel went to residential school at the tender  age of eight years old. Her earliest  recollections of learning "the odd word here  and there from my mom" signals that the  <i>st'áxcem</i> effect was well entrenched even before  Épelel went to residential school.</p> <p>Nonetheless, Halq'eméylem was as close in  memory to her as the next generation up,  when she heard her mom speak it. The "wee</p>
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A lot of times during the winter,  
I go to the smoke house,  
People get up and speak.  
I've always been in awe  
Of a person who got up there  
And spoke in the language,  
You know, rather than in English.  
Even if I didn't understand,  
I thought it was really neat  
To see somebody speak  
In the language.

*láw, éy swáyel,  
líhex wx we éya.*

Hearing it makes me feel good.  
You know, cause like I said,  
Our language is our culture.  
It's who we are.

I try to practice as often as I can.  
Nobody to talk to at home.  
That's why I mean to get into  
That immersion program where  
You'd have somebody there  
Everyday to speak to.

When I first started learning,  
Tseloyóthelwet was the teacher.  
She made learning fun.  
It comes easy  
When you're enjoying doing things.  
Didn't take long to learn.  
Tseloyóthelwet said  
I had a tongue for the language,  
Caught on right away,  
Making the sounds.

I'm not fluent at all,  
Wouldn't say I'm fluent.  
Just know a few phrases here and there.  
Yeah, I done a lot of studying,  
Recognize the language in writing, and  
Sometimes when I hear it.  
Yes, like I said,

when she heard her mom speak it. The “wee  
bit exposure to the language” that she  
experienced would serve to facilitate her  
learning Halq'eméylem later. Her sense of the  
language when she was young was that it was  
a natural part of her life, “just a different way  
mom said things.”

The earlier efforts to teach Halq'eméylem at  
the community level offered up a little taste of  
the language to a few people; Épelel was one  
of them. However, similar to other  
participants in those earlier efforts, after a  
brief interlude with the language, and  
gathering a fleeting sense of its importance,  
Épelel drifted away. “Guess my heart wasn't  
in it at the time,” says Épelel.

More recently though, only three years ago,  
Épelel sat herself down and came to a deeper  
understanding that learning the language  
would be “a good thing,” to learn “my mom's  
language.” It seemed important that she

<p>If they don't speak too fast.</p> <p>I need more practice.  No opportunities to speak,  Not at home, no.  Just when I come over here  To sit with the elders.  Oh, yeah, and when we have classes,  But I'm not in class anymore.  And at funerals, we sing.  I don't speak as much as I'd like,  Though I'd love to be fluent.  Got to get teaching Jason.  He's my little guy.  He's five.</p> <p>I don't know about other people,  But my kids think it's great.  When I told them  I was taking the language,  You know, "All right!"  Like I said, I am not really fluent  Enough to converse.  But other people,  When they hear the singing,  They love it.  I plan on teaching the grandkids.</p> <p>My latest granddaughter, Tish  Is going on five months old.  Hope when she starts talking  It will be Halq'eméylem.  Every time I see her  I always say "<i>T'ílson'étsa.</i>"</p> <p>It's getting higher status  In our community than it used to.  People would say,  "Why would you want to learn that?"  Whereas now, people say,  "Yes, this is a good thing."  I want my kids to learn.  The young people are hungry,</p>	<p>language." It seemed important that she specifically learn the language of her mom. She observed that only a few elders were speaking <i>Halq'eméylem</i>, and came to a deeper understanding of its relation to her identity and culture. Yes, it would be "a good thing" to learn <i>Halq'eméylem</i> for Épelel.</p> <p>What brought Épelel to this realization? Hearing it in the Smokehouse invoked in her a sense of "awe," connecting her to "who we are" in that spiritually rich context. Her affective reaction, "Hearing it makes me feel good," consolidated her connection to wanting to learn to the level of feeling, to how it made her feel.</p> <p>Épelel's "wee bit exposure to the language" in those earlier days influenced her facility with learning the <i>Halq'eméylem</i> sounds, some of which are extremely foreign to the English language. "<i>Tseloyóthekwet</i> said I had a tongue for the language," says Épelel, and though</p>
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<p>At least from what I've seen.</p> <p>The last time Stephen was down here,  [Stephen Point was one of the founders of  the Skulkayn Heritage Project (1972-74).]  At our LYS meeting,  He mentioned you have to  Change all the signs,  Put them all in Halq'eméylem.  Well Halq'eméylem first, and then English,  Because, you know, it's supposed  To be our first language.</p> <p>I just started a job  Teaching at the daycare in Chehalis,  Start the little ones off.  I learned some children's songs and Rhymes.  Just started, actually.  Ran into Pat and Ginny  At a funeral one day.  I was with Tseloyóthelwet,  And she was telling her,  "Oh we need a language teacher  For our Headstart."  Tseloyóthelwet pointed to me.  She says, "Oh, will you be interested?"  I say, "Yeah, I can bring up my resume."  She says, "okay, you do that."  Brought my resume in. A week later,  The lady phoned me,  Says, "Come on up."</p> <p>I taught people from the community,  At the Band Office for a while.  There was only about three or four  That wanted to learn at the time.  The Band Office were paying me.  Classes just fell apart,  ... And it was free.</p> <p>I got my resume in to Stó:lō Shxweli too,  For when they start classes.  Howlá:ia told me</p>	<p>for the language," says Épelel, and though  Épelel feels she has an inherent ability for the  language and has undertaken "a lot of  studying," she knows she is nowhere near  fluent in speaking Halq'eméylem. However,  she recognizes Halq'eméylem in aural and  written form. "No opportunities to speak,"  she says. Well, she does have a few - with the  elders, her classmates, and singing at funerals.  But she has come up with a plausible solution  for gaining practice in speaking  Halq'eméylem, "Got to get teaching  Jason... my little guy."</p> <p>When people talk about the language, the  word "love" usually comes up. People have  affection for the language when they hear  and/or are able to speak it, and words of  affection are common, "<i>Tl'ílsonrésal</i>." And the  affection, more often than not, is expressed in  relation to the children, and grandchildren,  whom Épelel hopes will be learning</p>
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<p>They got seven resumes. It's going to be a toss up, I guess, Who'll get the job.</p> <p>What makes it so neat, When our class started, there was 14, Then some dropped away. And there are seven of us who went through the whole thing together. That's through the four levels And all the Ling courses. That was a plus. We became one little family, Seeing each other for class And, yeah, we went through The NAID and PID too. When we were doing the NAID We were going to school For six days a week. "How did we do it?" We kept asking ourselves. "Oh my God! We did it, We finished."</p> <p>I learned I could do Anything I put my mind to Because, you know, when I started, I went "My God, What did I get myself into?" I just about quit When we started the NAID, And I thought, no, I'll try it. I wanted to learn to be a teacher. They said we had to teach Everybody the language. At least that's what <i>Tseloyóbelwaet</i> used to say, "What you're learning here, You teach everybody else."</p> <p>I'm a very shy person, and Wouldn't get in front of class And do anything. But doing the NAID, we had to.</p>	<p><i>Halq'éréylem</i> as their first language.</p> <p>Attitudes among community members toward learning <i>Halq'éméylem</i> have changed more recently, i.e., from Épelel's own confession that, "My heart wasn't in it," to "Yes, this is a good thing." And from Épelel's point of view, "The young people are hungry..." The change in attitude is found elsewhere as well, where people want to see it more widespread in our local media, signs on the road and so on.</p> <p>There is no shortage of opportunities to teach for those people who have gained some fluency in <i>Halq'éméylem</i>. Épelel, with the support of her mentor, <i>Tseloyóbelwaet</i>, landed a position to teach at the Head Start program in Chehalis. Teaching opportunities had not always been available, as Épelel's experience with her own Band indicated, "Classes just fell apart." The opportunities to teach for the few who have a modest level of <i>Halq'éréylem</i></p>
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We'd all be assigned something,  
 Would have to get up  
 In front of everybody and teach.  
 I thought, I'm never going to make it.  
 I got this friend Pat, eh.  
 Told her I was having a hard time  
 With the stuff in class.  
 And do you know what she did?  
 She started taking me to Karaoke bars,  
 Made me get up there and sing.  
 When I started, it was so hard.  
 I knew what I got to say all right,  
 But wouldn't face the people.  
 Every week she'd come and get me,  
 And say, "Oh, get up there."  
 I would go on.  
 After a while, it got so I could,  
 You know, stand up in front of people.  
 Singing was easy.  
 The talking was hard.

While we were still doing  
 All the Ling classes and language,  
 The other girls were teaching  
 Up here and up there.  
 I wouldn't go teach  
 Because of my classes.  
 If I had a teaching job,  
 I wouldn't have time to do homework;  
 Wouldn't teach while going to school.  
 I wrote a letter to Stó:lō Shxweli  
 When I sent them my resume. Said,  
 "I am ready now for teaching."

Never ever thought I'd be doing  
 Anything like this.  
 It's wonderful, truly wonderful.  
 When I first started,  
 It's all I really wanted  
 Was to just learn the language,  
 And when we first started taking classes, They  
 were already pushing us  
 To teach, too.

few who have a modest level of *Halq'éréyem*  
 abound now, but for certain key positions,  
 there is a bit of competition, such as in the  
 positions to teach the *Halq'éréyem* courses  
 with *Stó:lō Shxweli*. The *Stó:lō Shxweli* positions  
 might be thought to be more comfortable  
 environments for beginning teachers, as these  
 classes are where the budding teachers  
 learned to model their own teaching.

Épelel Épelel and the others who have built  
 their repertoire of *Halq'éréyem* and teaching  
 skills have become a cohesive group, a cohort  
 with a common mission, "one little family."  
 They went through so much together, and  
 wonder to themselves, "How did we do it?"  
 For Épelel, "doing it," meant facing a  
 personal challenge of overcoming her  
 shyness. Her courage and willingness to take  
 the risks to grow in her abilities is  
 commendable. Further, Épelel felt she had to  
 give her full attention to getting through the

<p>I didn't start 'til '97. That's Level One when I started.</p> <p>Everything I have, I made myself, Flip charts, and cassettes. We were supposed to get A language master for our band office. Never did get it. Every time I asked, "Oh, I ordered it, Don't know what's happening. Got to phone and see." Til this day, the Band Office Still hasn't got it. And the Band Office won't Schedule classes anymore. Don't know why. I used to bug them all the time. "Well, when are we having classes?" "Oh, well, gotta phone so and so." Got tired, so I just quit bugging them. That's why I'm not teaching At the Band Office anymore.</p> <p>Guess I could set up myself, But then they would have to Give me a key to the Band Office. Don't know if they'd want to do that. I could have classes in my home, But then I wouldn't get paid.</p> <p>I've got a computer. Oh, I would like to get Strang's CD, Yeah, the game he's got. Tyrone developed another CD. Don't know how he did it; He's got everything on the computer. I'd like to get what he's got, Yeah, Because the sound comes Right on the computer With <i>Tseloyóbehuet</i>'s pronunciation. I'd love to get those CDs.</p> <p>A lot more people</p>	<p><i>Halq'éréylem</i> courses, the linguistics courses, the NAID, PID and practicum. For Épelel, full attention to learning <i>Halq'eméylem</i> meant she would not take on teaching jobs while in study mode, a sacrifice of sorts. Being with her cohort "little family" was an important aspect of the learning process that made it a positive experience that helped her continue despite the challenges.</p> <p>And how did the few people, including Épelel, come to be the special few to find their way into the role of becoming <i>Halq'éréylem</i> revivalists? Some began during the earlier program at Skowkale, while others, such as Épelel, joined the revivalist movement while taking the <i>Halq'éréylem</i> courses that were developed as a result of the Skowkale program. One of their teachers, <i>Tseloyóbehuet</i>, can take credit for having encouraged and nurtured a number of the <i>Halq'eméylem</i> teachers into their role. Most</p>
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<p>Have become more comfortable  Trying to speak the language.  Whereas before, you know,  People wouldn't even try.  They said they sounded funny.  Nowadays there are more  And more people taking classes,  Using their little phrases  Everywhere they go.</p> <p>Rewards? I guess, learning  And speaking, and the singing.  I love to sing.  I learned as many songs as I could.  <i>Tseloyábelet</i> taught us,  And I've asked her for more,  But she hasn't had time  To make more tapes.</p> <p>Singing is praying.  That's what we were taught.  All the songs we sing, they're prayers.  Any time you sing,  You're praying.</p> <p>Challenges?  Trying to get fluent,  Needing somebody to talk to.  That's my only problem,  Just having the opportunity  To be able to practice.  I'm just going to teach  My little guy.  This immersion program sure  Would be a big help.  I'll tell my Band I gotta go.  Just join it  And send them the bill.</p> <p>My grandchildren  Need to know who they are,  Where they belong.  The language is our culture.</p>	<p>of them, including Epelel, had never in their wildest dreams, thought they would become <i>Halq'eméylem</i> teachers.</p> <p>Halq'eméylem teaching presents many challenges, such as having to make all the resources you use yourself, and not having access to resources and materials that might make teaching and learning more efficient, such as language masters. Language masters are machines that read sounds from cards, and words and phrases from the elders or teachers can be heard over and over.</p> <p>Language learners can record their own voices on the cards and hear themselves. In terms of resources available, it is yet to be seen how the CDs being developed by <i>Stó:ló Shxwéli</i> and Seabird Island will make a difference for the Halq'eméylem teachers and learners. Épelel understands the benefits of using these and other kinds of resources. She learned about these and other learning</p>
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<p>So, like I've always said,  When all my grandchildren are grown,  I want to hear just Halq'eméylem spoke,  And no English.  That's about 20 years  Down the road.</p> <p>With the response we're getting  From a lot of people right now  Coming to take the language,  I think, sure,  It is going to get widespread again.  Even one of the chiefs,  At a meeting, he came late.  "Oh, I'm sorry I'm late," he says,  "I was over at Shxwelí to sign up  To start my language class," he says.  Well, I thought, "right on!"</p> <p>Our language is who we are.  It makes us a unique people,  Makes us good.  It's what the ancestors left us.  What, like you said,  Identified who we were  By our language,  Our dialect,  Where we spoke it.</p> <p>When people hear you  Speak the language, they're proud.  They congratulate you.  It's easier nowadays for people to speak it.  Now, everybody wants to learn.  I see everybody learning the language.  They express respect  When you can speak the language.  And if you're teaching it, they think  That's just great.  You bring the language back,  And you teach everybody.</p> <p>Just to repeat myself,</p>	<p>strategies through her training in the Native  Adult Instructors Diploma Program (NAID),  the Provincial Instructors Diploma (PID),  and in the Linguistics Proficiency Program.  Épelel and her peers are learning and using  what little Halq'eméylem they know. She  observes that people "have become more  comfortable trying to speak the language  today." And the rewards for Épelel rest in  learning, speaking and especially singing in  <i>Halq'eméylem</i>. Singing connects Épelel to her  spirituality. "Singing is praying," she says.  Her greatest challenge is becoming fluent, and  having opportunities to practice. She  reiterates, the need "to teach my little guy,"  and is hopeful that the proposed immersion  program will serve to fill her fluency gap.  So, why go through all the effort? It's for the  future generations, who "need to know who  they are, where they belong," says Épelel.  Épelel hopes her grandchildren will be  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> speaking people, and feels</p>
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When my grandchildren grow up,  
I want this to be  
A Halq'eméylem speaking world.

*Halq'eméylem* speaking people, and feels confident that the language “is going to get widespread again.” She is hopeful, while observing that one of our chiefs has enrolled in *Halq'eméylem* to learn it, that one chief who has expressed concerned about our *Halq'eméylem* language is walking the talk. Épelel connects our language with the past, with our ancestors, and clearly understands how it connects us more closely to our identity. She sees that the feeling for the language is positive today; people are proud of our language and respect those who take the time to learn how to speak it. In Épelel's estimation, “It's easier today, “everybody wants to learn it.” For the future, Épelel's ultimate dream is that her grandchildren will grow up in “a *Halq'eméylem* speaking world.”



*Siyàmiyatéliyot* Elizabeth Phillips



***“They went and taught on their own.”***

**ELIZABETH PHILLIPS.**

January 8, 2001. At Elizabeth’s home in Chehalis.

I’ve known Halq’eméylem  
From when I was a child;  
My parents were Halq’eméylem speakers.  
That’s all that was spoken,  
Except when *Xwéltsem* came,  
Father would talk English.  
If anyone wanted to speak to my mother,  
Father would translate.  
That’s why it’s so easy for me to translate;  
Yes, right from the cradle,  
My father translated to my mom;  
She would say whatever she wanted to say,  
And he would translate it to whoever.  
My parents were very surprised  
I could speak English.  
They had no idea.  
They didn’t teach me,  
Though in their own way, they did.  
When somebody spoke to me in English,  
And I answered,  
My parents were in awe.

I was raised on Seabird Island;  
All our neighbours  
Spoke Halq’eméylem.  
I was born in 1939. Much has happened  
To the language since then.  
People used to send a runner to  
Tell all the neighbours  
If the ladies were going berry picking,  
Tell everybody to have a little lunch,  
Have their berry picking basket,  
A little one, and a big one to pour into.  
Everybody would meet

**Siyàmiyatéliyot**

Siyàmiyatéliyot works for *Stó:lō Shxwélt*, and is one of only a few *Stó:lō* elders who is both fluent in *Halq’eméylem*, and knows how to write the language. Her contribution to the language at this critical stage is invaluable and irreplaceable. I was happy she agreed to be in my study. We held our talk at her home in Chehalis.

During Siyàmiyatéliyot’s youth, the language was prevalent, spoken by both her parents. “That was all that was spoken.” Her parents did not speak to her in English and were “in awe” when they discovered that their little girl understood it, learning it all on her own. The power of being exposed to a language at a young age manifested in ’s own life, and illustrates the benefit of exposing our young children to *Halq’eméylem* at every opportunity.

<p>A certain place on Seabird  At oh, maybe 7:00 o'clock in the morning.  Off we would go to Hickses lake,  Way up on the mountain, by Seabird, there.  They'd call in Halq'eméylem.  That's all I heard,  Was Halq'eméylem.</p> <p>I was 7 years old, when I  Had to go to St. Mary's in Mission,  A Residential School.  It was 1947.  Guess my English it was pretty good,  Didn't have trouble in the classroom.  Not many spoke Halq'eméylem. They  Shipped young ones to different schools,  Like Kamloops, and Sechelt  To separate all the speakers.  I don't know how they did it.  The only time I spoke Halq'eméylem  Was Easter when my parents came.  Then naturally we would  Be speaking Halq'eméylem again.  I never did lose my Halq'eméylem.  Mother didn't speak any English.  If she did, it was broken;  I always spoke to her in <i>Halq'eréylem</i>.</p> <p>I went to Mission school from '47 to '54.  A lot of times we really didn't come home.  My parents went to the U.S.  To follow the harvest, picking  Strawberries, raspberries, hops  And things like that.  I went with my parents to these places. Spoke  <i>Halq'eréylem</i> then.</p> <p>When I came home from Mission,  It didn't seem the people  Were speaking our language.  They started to pass on, and  The ones coming home from the schools  were all speaking English.</p>	<p>English would be spoken in her home "when  <i>Xwelítem</i> came." During these visits from  <i>Xwelítem</i>, Siyàmiyatéliyot would listen to her  father translate for her mother what the  <i>Xwelítem</i> were saying, teaching her not only  meaning in the English language, but how  meaning was translated from English to  <i>Halq'eréylem</i> and vice-versa.</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot was raised on Seabird Island  and remembers a prevalence of <i>Halq'eréylem</i>  in the community, and tells how the women  were gathered together to go berry picking.  At that time, "that's all I heard was  <i>Halq'eréylem</i>," she says. Siyàmiyatéliyot  remembers <i>Halq'eréylem</i> as being a  picturesque language and all she was learning  and hearing, she was "putting it all away in my  memory." And she relates the meaning of  <i>Ts'ekwéjeyu</i> and how its meaning and events  are associated with the specific place on the  River that it represents. "You're going along</p>
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Speaking and hearing the language  
 Was pretty far and in-between.  
 The only speakers was like, oh, I guess  
 When my aunty Jean Silver came over,  
 Her and I would be speaking.  
 These are all late people now,  
 Another was Agnes Kelly.  
 Whenever we came with speakers,  
 Naturally we would speak Halq'eméylem.  
 A lot of them, like Amelia,  
 The late Amelia Douglas,  
 Always wanted to see my Mom;  
 She didn't pass on until 1980.  
 All these different speakers  
 Would come to our house,  
 All speaking Halq'eméylem.  
 They got lonely for the language,  
 And would come over and see Mom,  
 Because that's all she knew.

It isn't easy for people  
 To translate our language.  
 It was easier for me;  
 It was done while I was an infant.  
 I kept hearing it,  
 Putting it all away in my memory.  
 Halq'eméylem is so picturesque;  
 That's how I describe it.  
 Some words can't really translate;  
 Will take a whole paragraph  
 In English, yeah.

The word *Ts'elxwéjɛɾw*  
 Means it's a shallow place;  
 It's Chilliwack; it's like  
 You're going along in a canoe, *qe ts'eláxwélexw,*  
 That's where you go to land  
 With your canoe, you go in.  
 That's why Sqwá is called  
 Chilliwack Landing,  
 Where a lot of people went  
 With all their canoes, and

in a canoe, *qe ts'eláxwélexw,* that's where you go  
 to land," she says. And "where you go to  
 land" is also where people met for news and  
 other reasons for gathering there.

Siyàmiyatéliyot's days of enjoying *Halq'eréylem*  
 prevalence would be short lived with the  
 advent of her going to St. Mary's residential  
 school in Mission at seven years of age. She  
 escaped "trouble in the classroom" because  
 her "English it was pretty good." Speaking  
*Halq'eréylem* was taboo at residential school  
 and was assured by separating children of the  
 same language. The only opportunity á would  
 have to speak *Halq'eréylem* would be when  
 her parents visited, "then naturally we would  
 be speaking *Halq'eréylem* again." Her positive  
 and rich experiences at home and in her  
 community combined with not having  
 "trouble in the classroom" enhanced her  
 chances of remembering her *Halq'eréylem*  
 language. "Never did lose my *Halq'eréylem,*"

<p>Stay there for no less than four days.  They used to meet up,  Oh, perhaps maybe a priest would go there,  And they would have a church gathering.  People meet and catch up  With everybody, the new ones,  News from families.</p> <p>We still had a few speakers;  They wanted us on video.  It was Coqualeetza  At what they call the gift shop.  We were meeting in that one room there.  Amelia Douglas and Agnes Kelly  Were still alive, and I think  Jean Silver might have been still alive then,  And, oh, Nancy Phillips,  She could have been alive yet too.  Today, I have a good level of fluency,  But when I went to work for Coqualeetza,  It advanced what I have.  I learned the writing system;  I knew my words;  To write it down was different.  Once I learned how to read it,  What I didn't know,  I could read and put away.  Like for instance, counting  Wasn't that important in just everyday life.  We just spoke together,  Mother, Father and myself.  The highest I could count was <i>lbeq'átses</i>.  When I went to work for Coqualeetza,  And learned the writing system,  I count way more.  I didn't know all my trees,  Surely I didn't know all my plants.  And so, that's how I learned,  Working with the other elders.</p> <p>My involvement with Coqualeetza  Started in, I believe '83.  Naturally, because I could go out and work</p>	<p>she says.</p> <p>After Mission school from '47 to '54,  Siyàmiyatéliyot would not hear the language  spoken with the same prevalence as before  her schooling. The older people were passing  on and the younger ones came home  speaking only English. The <i>st'ácm</i> effect was  taking hold and at a fairly fast pace, to a point  where "Speaking and hearing the language  was pretty far and in-between."</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot remembers when the older  ones who knew the language would come to  speak with her mother because <i>Halq'eréylem</i>  was all she spoke, and because they "got  lonely for the language." <i>Halq'eréylem</i> was  becoming precious in its swift demise.</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot worked with the language,  learning it and sharing it since she was "just a  young lady." She was involved with the early  Skulkayn Heritage Project when the early  pioneers in <i>Halq'eréylem</i> language revival</p>
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After my Mother passed on.  
 It must have been '82 when Shirley Leon  
 And Amelia Douglas approached me  
 To work with Coqualeetza part-time.  
 That's when we were transcribing  
 Words from the Skulkayn Heritage Project.

I'm proud to say I was part of the Project,  
 But more or less listening.  
 I did not want to be arrogant,  
 Say, oh I know this word, or that.  
 Albert drove my mom there;  
 That's how the elders gathered  
 A long time ago.  
 Somebody would volunteer their home,  
 And all the elders would meet.  
 Bob Hall and Stephen Point  
 Would set up their machine,  
 Have a long list of words  
 They wanted to record.  
 After the elders had their meal,  
 They'd start on the words.  
 Each elder take turns  
 How they would say the word.  
 I was just a young lady, then.

The only ones I seem to be able to speak to  
 Is *Ts'ats'elxwót*, Elizabeth Herrling, and  
*Yómalot*, Rosaleen George.  
 Those are the only two that I know  
 That speak it fluently.  
 Young people have interest;  
 That's one good thing about them.  
 They call me,  
 Do their very best,  
 Don't even try to be self-conscious;  
 They just use it.  
 When the students see me  
 They always want to speak to me  
 In Halq'eméylem.  
 They can pick up some words,  
 Even if it's an Island speaker.  
 You definitely can understand

pioneers in *Halq'eméylem* language revival  
 would meet, share a meal and record the  
 language. She also worked with the early  
 pioneers of the later initiative at Coqualeetza,  
 working with the mentors who eventually  
 passed on, leaving her and a few others to  
 continue their legacy. During these early  
 years she gained the tools and knowledge,  
 which combined with the language she was  
 "putting away" when she was small, made her  
 the invaluable expert in writing and translating  
*Halq'eméylem* language that she is today.

It wasn't that long ago, in fact, it was in  
 Siyàmiyatéliyot's lifetime that *Halq'eméylem*  
 flourished in her community of Seabird  
 Island. Now, she says, "The only ones I seem  
 to be able to speak to is *Ts'ats'elxwót*,  
 Elizabeth Herrling, and *Yómalot*, Rosaleen  
 George." The *st'áxcem* effect took such a  
 stronghold among the *Stó:lō* in such a short  
 time, and Siyàmiyatéliyot was witness to its

<p>When an Island person is speaking In the longhouse. I think all the changes is good. It was maybe better than 7 years ago or so, When I heard somebody say They didn't want their children Taught Halq'eméylem. I Don't think anybody has said that recently.</p> <p>I can't even remember When I started to teach. I had been teaching at Skwah, at Landing, Just the little wee ones, though. Before that, they wanted us to go Into Chilliwack. We were startin to teach, Can't remember what grades. We didn't have any materials When we first went in. Can you imagine how that was? Sure it's a oral language, But it's hard to teach others That have no idea of the language. You had to have something To show what you're saying. The late Amelia and I Had to go into the classroom, And we didn't have anything. That was really difficult.</p> <p>I only work 2 and a half days For Stó:lō Shxweli. Coqualeetza usually takes me back For one day, but they didn't. Perhaps it's difficulty with funding. I was teaching with Donna Giroux At Landing. She goes there by herself now. She's real good, can carry on. Only time I went alone I had to go to St. Mary's in Mission Working for Bill Williams For a year or two. Albert used to drive me to Mission</p>	<p>growing influence throughout her lifetime. Witnessing this <i>st'á:em</i> stronghold in the community, Siyàmiyatéliyot says, "It was maybe better than 7 years ago or so, when I heard somebody say they didn't want their children taught <i>Halq'eméylem</i>." Now the trend is changing. Siyàmiyatéliyot is witnessing another change in her lifetime, a shift from an era of <i>st'á:em</i> to one where we are moving ever more closely to an era of <i>smelá:lh</i> once again. <i>Halq'eméylem</i> revival plays a large role in that movement toward <i>smelá:lh</i>.</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot recalls her teaching experiences, and she had many. In the earlier days she was plunked into a classroom and given nothing but a mandate to teach <i>Halq'eméylem</i>. "Can you imagine how that was?" she says incredulously, "That was really difficult." In the earlier days only few <i>Stó:lō</i> people were aware of the value of keeping <i>Halq'eméylem</i> alive. Yes, indeed, teaching a</p>
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<p>To teach the Head Start.  I love teaching the little ones.  I used to teach the adults  On the Coqualeetza property.  We'd have about 10 or more students,  About an hour at a time.  I liked it too,  Teaching the adults.  They were pretty hungry  For the language,  And now, more and more.  It was quite an honour for me  To be asked me to go and work.  There are other speakers,  Yet I was asked to go.</p> <p>Stó:lō Nation asked Coqualeetza  To teach at Stó:lō Shxweli  In the earlier days.  We agreed to teach. It was in '95.  Peter, Donna and myself  Were going in there.  Donna sort of worked both, eh.  She was a student, and was learning too.  It was sometime in '95.</p> <p>I had a contract with Coqualeetza.  The students never understood  Why I couldn't just stand up and say,  "I'm with you."  They sent me notes saying,  "Don't leave us, don't leave us."  I had a written contract with Coqualeetza.  That's where I had to be.  I couldn't just say,  "Stó:lō Shxweli wants only me,"  Sort of kicking Coqualeetza  Who employed me several years there.  It wouldn't have been loyal;  I felt I had to be loyal.</p> <p>When I started teaching,  It was with Shirley Norris (Julian now).</p>	<p>language that few people within, and less  outside, the community valued would be  challenging. Nonetheless, Siyàmiyatéliyot  rose to the occasion to share her knowledge.  "It was quite an honour for me to be asked to  go and work."</p> <p>If you can imagine how hard it is to learn a  second language such as French with all the  resources, training and status afforded it, you  can imagine how hard it must have been for  Siyàmiyatéliyot, and the others, when almost  all she had was the language that she "put  away" when she was a little girl. Now,  imagine a small girl of seven years old  separated from her home and community for  several years and forbidden to speak her  mother tongue. Growth and sophistication in  the language would likely come to a halt.  Siyàmiyatéliyot in her adult years would  recognize that her <i>Halq'ənəylem</i> knowledge  could be elevated to a more sophisticated</p>
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<p>She had her teacher's degree;  We were a team.  She got the language,  I could see her teaching skills, and  How she went about teaching.  A time came, she felt  She learned enough from me,  Of the language.  She went and taught alone,  Here in Chehalis first,  Or it was Seabird?  Joe Aleck next came,  And we went team teaching  Different places.  Then, he felt sure of himself and  Went off on his own too.  All those times  People felt sure of themselves  With the language they learned from me,  And went and taught on their own,  That was something  I had been successful in doing.  Now Peter and Donna  Are on their own, too,  And Tess Ned.  Her and I were a team for some time;  Now they're all on their own.  That's something I have accomplished.</p> <p>The book I was showing you,  Is quite a challenge,  Because, there's Latin, and  Of course I can't read Latin.  But thankful enough,  I know the Halq'eméylem.  I can go and look up in  <i>Tálméls Ye Sijehólex wa</i>, Brent's book,  Then write it down.  That way I can tape it and know the word.  I can look at Brent's other book,  Hill-Tout and Boas;  You see all the different writing systems.</p>	<p>adult level through her work with elders.</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot worked with the Coqualeetza  Centre for quite a few years and then first  became involved with the <i>Stó:ló Shxwéli</i>  program in the earlier days when it was just  starting up. Coqualeetza and <i>Stó:ló Shxwéli</i>  were working together, but eventually ended  their relationship in a bitter split. The  students at <i>Stó:ló Shxwéli</i> begged  Siyàmiyatéliyot to stay with them, but she was  bound to stay with Coqualeetza through her  own sense of loyalty to an organization that  had employed her for so many years, and the  need to honour her contract with  Coqualeetza. At the start of the year 2000,  Siyàmiyatéliyot joined <i>Stó:ló Shxwéli</i> as  translator, writer and recorder of our  <i>Halq'eméylem</i> language, and continues to this  day.</p> <p>Siyàmiyatéliyot has a generous spirit, generous  with her own knowledge and expertise and</p>
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I can look at it and remember up here  
 How their system goes;  
 I could just read the Halq'eméylem.  
 I learned the International Phonetic  
 Alphabet at UBC.  
 The IPA makes my life better.  
 I could pick up anything and read it.  
 Albert said he picked something up  
 Kamloops way.  
 He didn't know what he was saying,  
 But he could read it.  
 The people were really surprised.

What motivates me?  
 All the students that have  
 Interest in the language now,  
 Plus my family. My grandson was one  
 Of the Stó:lō Shxweli students,  
 Stephen Williams. He's one of them  
 That taped himself singing  
 Some of the Halq'eméylem songs  
 And reciting some of the prayers  
 That he learned.  
 If that can't really motivate me,  
 I don't know what else could.

It isn't hard working at home.  
 At first, I thought it would be difficult.  
 But the way with Albert's health,  
 I would be sort of worried  
 If I was over there.  
 Don't get me wrong;  
 I love to be with *Ts'ats'alexwót* and *Yómalot*,  
*Tiále* and *T'owkōmót*.  
 I love being there with them.  
 Another thing is the travel,  
 One hour, or maybe 45 minutes each way.  
 I can work for those two hours.  
 Once in a while,  
 I have to turn off the telephone.  
 If I'm working with *T'owkōmót*,  
 [at *Stó:lō Shxweli*]  
 And she gets called away,

with her own knowledge and expertise and  
 with the knowledge and expertise that she  
 gained from the pioneers who went before  
 her. She is proud of her accomplishments in  
 passing her knowledge on to others who in  
 turn have become confident enough in their  
 knowledge and ability to go on their own.  
 She had many mentors in her day, and has  
 mentored many others. Siyàmiyatéliyot's  
 greatest reward is witnessing her former  
 protégés teach and use the language on their  
 own, and in turn, they mentor others with  
 what they know, a ripple effect.

The work Siyàmiyatéliyot is doing today  
 involves complex material and she uses all the  
 devices at her disposal to wend her way  
 through them. Because of her Halq'eméylem  
 knowledge, she is able to decipher the  
 different ways that our language was written  
 by anthropologists and linguists. Learning the  
 International Phonetic Alphabet was also

Then I'm left alone.  
I go join the elders, and  
Don't know whether I'm intruding.  
If they find that they need me  
At Stó:lō Shxwéli,  
They definitely let me know.

Gee Whiz, I don't want to be negative  
About the revival of our language,  
But a long time ago,  
How the language used to work,  
Even the storekeepers, the *Xwelitem*  
Got to know the language, and the priests  
Used to be able to talk the language.  
So, I mean, how do I answer that?  
But, grant you, the priests wanted to learn  
The Our Father.  
So, that's a good sign right there.  
He is the priest that we have, Father Gerry;  
I call him the singing priest.

If I were to go out there,  
Go, say at a gathering,  
Only the young people, only the students  
Would speak to me in Halq'eméylem.  
All the ones, I guess,  
You would call them passive speakers,  
They would only speak English to me.  
Like, my neighbour, here, Ceci.  
Her people were fluent,  
But then with her husband  
Being not a speaker,  
She never spoke it  
Through her marriage lifetime.  
Same with me. He isn't a speaker;  
I can't speak to my mate in my language.  
If we had took on the ways of the Maori,  
It would have a chance.  
But with life the way it is now...  
Say, if we had an infant,  
A room of infants, and had speakers  
Speaking all the time.  
If these infants would be able

extremely helpful to her in her work.  
Siyàmiyatéliyot chooses to work at home,  
isolated from what is going on in the  
community at large and even in her home  
community of Chehalis. But she works better  
there. First, because she can work  
uninterrupted, and second, she is worried  
about Albert, her husband who is not well  
these days. And if you asked her what  
motivates her to continue in the work despite  
all the challenges, she would say, "All the  
students that have an interest in the language  
now, plus my family."

However, if you asked her if she believes the  
language will become a functional living  
language once again, her answer would be  
tentative, "Gee Whiz, I don't want to be  
negative..." And her doubtfulness would be  
understandable. Imagine that in the  
beginning of her life, she lived surrounded by  
*Halq'eméylem*, witnessed the near

To put it away like I had,  
 Perhaps we would have a chance.  
 But, all the young people  
 Wouldn't be able to volunteer  
 Their infant to speakers.  
 Maybe it's possible,  
 Because I think it was,  
 What group was that now?  
 They had two young men that learned it  
 How Nancy was teaching,  
 Kindergarten on up.  
 That's how they were coming up,  
 And they were speakers.

A long time ago  
 When the people were all speakers,  
 Say it's Sts'a'iles and Sq'ewqéyl,  
 Chehalis, Seabird and Th'ewáli,  
 Or Ts'elxwéyeqw,  
 All these different speakers.  
 When they were all together,  
 Were all speaking,  
 They could all tell from which area  
 This person was by just by how they spoke.  
 If it was Tait or Ts'elxwéyeqw,  
 They could all tell.  
 That's how they could identify  
 Within the Nation. That's how  
 People can claim where they belong.  
 This is my belief.  
 When I teach a person,  
 And say, mine's Tait,  
 Then another speaker seems automatically  
 Their own would come out,  
 How their people spoke.  
 Say I'm teaching a Ts'elxwéyeqw,  
 Then their own way of speaking is natural,  
 It just comes.

A person can have their Native pride  
 When they know their language.  
 When I see the students singing  
 In Halq'eméylem,

extinguishment of *Halq'eméylem* as English became the language of use. She says, "a long time ago, how the language used to work, even the storekeepers, the *Xwelitem* got to know the language, and the priests used to be able to talk the language. So, I mean, how do I answer that?" But she is not completely without hope for our language, seeing possibilities in a Maori approach and with *Stó:lō Shxwáli's* proposed immersion program for teacher trainees.

The elders who know the language know and speak most eloquently about the language and what it means to us as *Stó:lō* people. The language identifies who we are in a literal way. The way we speak it identifies us with a specific location, is our connection to our place on this earth. *Siyàmiyatéliyot* believes this connection is inherent and will naturally come out when we learn to speak the language. She sees the language as being

They're really proud of who they are.  
 Being Native, you have a spirit,  
 Spirituality in our people  
 Is pretty important.  
 When the students are using  
 The language and song, or prayer,  
 It brings their spirit to life,  
 So to speak; it is very important.  
 If you only speak in English,  
 All you're doing is using  
 The borrowed language.  
 To imagine life without my language,  
 I'd be living a lie;  
 That sounds devastating to me.

The worldview,  
 Some people think it's lost,  
 But it's in the language.  
 One of the expressions that  
 My Father and my Mother used was...  
 Even if it was a lady,  
*Wiqetbet*, in the language.  
 It's saying, "becoming manly."  
 I heard somebody say it was the difference  
 Between a person and an animal.  
 You could think, could speak, naturally.  
 It wouldn't be insulting if somebody  
 Were to say that I was manly.  
 I always found it really strange.  
 That statement translated,  
 To become manly,  
 That would be to almost know everything  
 You should know, should do.  
 It doesn't make sense in English.

All the aunts and the grandmothers  
 And the uncles and the grandfathers,  
 Had to take part in teaching.  
 They would look at a person  
 And an elder would know  
 If this was a young lady,  
 Then they tell an aunt,  
 "It's time to start teaching this one."

connected to who we are spiritually, sees the positive effects of the language, the affective quality. She says, "When the students are using the language and song, or prayer, it brings their spirit to life."

Siyàmiyatéliyot understands deeply the idea that our language expresses our worldview and knows that its meanings are not easily translatable into English. Meanings in *Halq'eréylen* are still fresh in her mind. She explains the deeper meanings of *Wiqetbet*, which means much more than the literal translation, "to become manly," and how the only English word that comes near to explaining *Iyéseq* is "a gentleman."

"The language means everything to me," says Siyàmiyatéliyot, "I'm here whenever anybody needs me." She pays accolades to the ones who are working to learn and save the language, and bemoans the fact that there are no male elders involved in the language work.

An uncle or a grandfather  
Would look at that young man and say,  
“He’s going to be a chief;  
You better start teaching him  
All the things that a chief,  
A leader should know.”

There was one, he’s a man already,  
He asked me “What is the meaning of my  
name?” It was *Iyéseq*.  
I kept thinking about his name, and I  
Told him in the English language  
It was “a gentleman.”  
That was the only way I could say it to him  
Because he isn’t a speaker.  
If I keep thinking about it,  
I could tell him even more about his name.  
When asked on the spot,  
I can’t really think it all out at once.

I hope all these things don’t get lost,  
All the different ways of teaching,  
How the men teach their son  
How to go hunting,  
All the ways they were to be taught,  
Even if they don’t have the language.  
I hope that isn’t lost.  
All the uncles are supposed to teach,  
But I guess nowadays it’s the fathers.  
They are trying to get everything  
From the elders that we have,  
From the speakers,  
Trying to put everything away.

The language means everything to me.  
I’m doing everything in my power  
To make sure it is preserved;  
I know it will be used.  
*Stó:lō Shxweli*’s doing everything  
They can to use the language,  
Doing their best to carry on.  
*Tiále* always phones me up,  
And if it isn’t her, it is *Tl’owkōmót*,

no male elders involved in the language work.

“Naturally, a woman talking to another  
woman is one way of talking. Then men,  
naturally, would have their own way.”

*Siyàmiyatéliyot* hopes that the cultural  
practices will be carried on whether or not it  
happens with the language.

*Siyàmiyatéliyot* was born in a *Halq’eréylen*  
speaking world, a world where her father  
could build a house from his sickbed, in  
*Halq’eréylen*. “Can you imagine?” she says.

And I, who struggle with the simplest  
*Halq’eréylen* terms, will ever only be able to  
try to imagine that world.

If they need anything translated.  
Everything seems to be at their fingertips,  
There, the tapes, the CD ROM.

It's sort of sad there are so few of us left.  
I'm glad we're here to do some of it,  
So it won't be lost.  
All the young ones are quite dear to us,  
Making an effort to learn.  
It wasn't there before.

I'm here whenever anybody needs me.  
It doesn't matter if it's the weekend.  
I guess a lot of them just can't make it here.  
Some of them were coming, like Judy,  
For the mentoring.  
She only came twice.  
I must be too far out,  
None of them can make it this way.

It's too bad we didn't have  
More men doing language work.  
That's another side to it. Naturally,  
A woman talking to another woman  
Is one way of talking.  
Then men, naturally, would have  
Their own way.  
Seems like such a shame that would be lost,  
How men would talk to one another.

My father was a carpenter;  
He could teach.  
When he got bed-ridden,  
His brother and his nephew come to him;  
They'd talk the language.  
He would tell them how to cut the boards.  
He practically built a house from his bed.  
Really. His brother and nephew would say,  
*Xw'e'it Wōw'iqe*, saying,  
"Wōw'iqe, what do we do, now?"  
He would tell them,  
"This is how long you cut the boards,"  
And that's all in the language.

Can you imagine? He built a house from his bed.	
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*Yómalot* Rosaleen George



***“I was going to be stubborn”***

**ROSALEEN GEORGE.**

January 9, 2001. At the home of Rosaleen George.

That’s the first language I ever spoke  
When I was growing up.  
All I knew was Halq’eméylem  
Right from the beginning of my life.  
Always had it.

I went to school in Mission;  
Didn’t know English.  
My step-mother  
Was brought up in Mission too.  
All she did was speak English to us;  
Called me stupid because  
I didn’t understand English.  
I really felt uneasy,  
Felt so bad.  
She was calling me stupid,  
Blockhead, and things like that.  
I asked my dad,  
“Can I go to Mission?  
I want to go to school.”  
Dad asked me, “Why do  
You want to go to school?”  
Told him, “I’m dumb,  
I’m stupid, I’m blockheaded.”  
Right away, Dad knew  
What it was about,  
So he sent me to Mission.  
But when I got there,  
We were forbidden  
To speak our language,  
In Mission.

I was nine years old.  
That’s around that time

**Yómalot**

I met Yómalot for our talk at her home on Skwah Reserve. I was delighted that she agreed to be in my study. We had fun figuring out how to set up the recorder and making sure Yómalot would be comfortable while we talked. Yómalot was eager to talk about her experiences and shared candidly. Both she and Siyàmiyatéliyot reminded me of my own mother, but in different ways for each of them. Siyàmiyatéliyot reminded me of the gentle nature of my mom and Yómalot reminded me of the mischievous spunkiness about her. After recording our talk, Yómalot offered me tea and we visited laughing and talking about things.

Yómalot only spoke *Halq’eméylem* until she went to Residential School at nine years of age. Duties at home, and helping her

grandmother care for her sick brother

<p>My brother passed away.  He died  From residential school.  I was with my grandmother  Looking after my sick brother,  Hardly paying attention  To my stepmother.  That's when I begin to wonder  About English, this other language.  Our neighbour, she was going  To school in Mission,  Could sing and talk like that.  I thought she was smart;  That's why I asked Dad  If I could go to school.  He let me go.</p> <p>Á:ʔa. (Yes.), I wanted to learn English  Because of my stepmother.  She used to come with a piece of board,  Says, "This is your head."</p> <p>Thought I better learn  To talk English too.  Wasn't too anxious about it, but thought,  If I have to understand,  Guess I better go to school.  So I did.</p> <p>Yeah, my Grandmother and my Sister  We never spoke English,  Even my aunt and uncles...  My stepmother could speak  In Halq'eméylem,  But most of the time she spoke English.  Don't know what was the matter with her.  Was she deprived of our language too?  I wonder.  I never asked her  About things like that.  We lived in Harrison.  Dad worked in the logging,  A booming ground.</p>	<p>grandmother care for her sick brother,  delayed her going to school. "He [her  brother] died from residential school," she  said, and up until that time, Yómalot didn't  concern herself with going to school or  learning English. Her mother died when she  was two years old and her father remarried.</p> <p>The <i>st'áxem</i> effect had become well  entrenched among the people around her.  English became the language everyone spoke.  Her stepmother, who had been to residential  school, taunted Yómalot for not speaking  English. "Á:ʔa, I wanted to learn English  because of my stepmother. She used to come  with a piece of board, says, 'this is your  head.'" And she had heard others coming  home from Mission who "could sing and talk  like that." The power of the <i>st'áxem</i> effect  made Yómalot resign herself to going to  school to learn English.</p>
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I went to school November 30, 1929,  
 Before I became 10 on December 14<sup>th</sup>, yeah.  
 I remember that day.  
 I remembered  
 When some of these girls from Chehalis,  
 They told me, "You are not allowed  
 To speak our language.  
 You gotta speak English,  
 And if you get caught  
 Talking our language with us,  
 You gonna get punished."  
 I asked, "Why? Why?"  
 And the Sister was right there listening,  
 Didn't know what I was saying.  
 We were talking in our language,  
 And she asked Emma,  
 "Did you tell her everything?"  
 Emma says, "Yeah."  
 She says, "All right, you go."  
 She sent Emma and Tina away.  
 They come from Chehalis;  
 We knew each other,  
 Spoke Halq'eméylem all the time.

I was really, really lost.  
 Why did I want to come to school?  
 I was thinking,  
 I'll never, never, never forget my language.  
 I don't have to forget my language.  
 Walking around by myself,  
 Nobody to talk to,  
 I kept thinking that  
 I was going to be stubborn...  
 Wasn't ever going to forget  
 My language.  
 Whenever the Sister talked to me,  
 I spoke to her in my own thoughts  
 In my language.  
 It took quite a while me doing that.  
 I used to get pushed around,  
 And she used to do that to my ears.  
 Took that whole year to get used of,

And away she went, to Mission school, away  
 from her family and familiar people, away  
 from *Halq'eméylem*, the only language she  
 knew. Yómalot remembers the exact day,  
 month and year she went to Mission school,  
 and during her stay there would be forbidden  
 to speak her language, forbidden to speak  
 with others who knew it. The Sisters used  
 threats of punishment and separated children  
 of the same tongue. As vividly as Yómalot  
 remembers the day she went to Mission, she  
 recalls the pact she made with herself, "I kept  
 thinking I was going to be stubborn... Wasn't  
 ever going to forget my language." And  
 though she would feel isolated, get pushed  
 around and have her ears pulled, she would  
 determine to "never, never, never forget my  
 language." Yómalot's stubbornness is a gift  
 to us; for all that she retained, she now shares  
 unconditionally.  
  
 Having gone to residential school at the

<p>But I was trying. I was there five years.</p> <p>As soon as you're fourteen, You were sent out of school To give room for the new ones To come to school. I only reached grade five, and Was sent home.</p> <p>I didn't forget. Grandmother used to come up and see me, And Albert Phillips' mother too. She used to feel so bad, Would talk to me as if she was my mother. She'd hang on to me, And we'd talk, walk around, Talk in our language. She was a very nice person, Albert Phillips' mother.</p> <p>Quite a few people spoke it then, A lot of our elders, they all spoke. Many didn't go to Mission, Same's my grandmother, never went. But my mom, Don't know nothing about her. She died when I was two years old; Didn't get to know her. The other elders, I spoke with them. One time an old lady, She looked at me, "You still remember your language?" I said, "Yes." She said, "Look at those girls, They're darker than you, And don't want to speak their language." "Oh my," I says, "guess they're too proud." That's all I could say.</p> <p>Down Musqueam way, That's one other place</p>	<p>relatively late age of nine years and having stayed there for a relatively short period of five years may have been the circumstances that allowed her to preserve the language in her thoughts. When she came home from Mission, Yómalot was able to speak with the elders who escaped the residential school experience and who could still speak the language. They were amazed that the younger Yómalot still had the language.</p> <p>Yómalot would encounter yet another challenge associated with her speaking the <i>Halq'éréylen</i> language; this time, from her relatives in Musqueam who spoke another dialect of our language. Her dad was from Musqueam and "signed up Chehalis" so he could marry her mom. His family and community members teased him for having adopted the language of his wife. "They just found it so funny because they said up here our words were so flat." Yómalot accepted</p>
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I used to be criticized  
 Because I spoke up here.  
 And when I got down there,  
 I says, oh “*Éwe, Á’a*,”  
 And they asked me something,  
 “*Li*” and “*O, tlæw*,”  
 Oh, my goodness sakes, this thing!  
 And it’s different, hey?  
 But we understood each other,  
 Just the dialects was really different.  
 She used to say, “*Éwe, l-i-i*,” to me.  
 Copying this language up here,  
 And down there, instead of saying *li*,  
 We’d say *ni*. That’s a difference.

My Dad come from down there.  
 He came up to Chehalis, married my Mom,  
 And had to sign up Chehalis.  
 Grandfather wouldn’t let my mom go.  
 He had to stay in Chehalis  
 If he wanted to marry my Mom.  
 His sisters and brothers used to tease him,  
 Asking him if he talks like that now.  
 They just found it so funny  
 Because they said up here  
 Our words were so flat.  
 Well, I didn’t mind because  
 They’re both my people.  
 Down that way’s my people,  
 Up here’s my people.  
 And we understand each other too.

I was so used of that language,  
 White language.  
 Only time I spoke Halq’eméylem  
 Was when I met older people,  
 And I’d speak our language.  
 My oldest daughter,  
 She spoke Halq’eméylem.  
 I used to talk to her,  
 And so did my husband.  
 He was a Halq’eméylem man, too.  
 Grew up speaking the same language, yeah.

the teasing, “They’re both my people, down  
 that way’s my people, up here’s my people,  
 and we understand each other too.”

English overtook *Halq’eméylem* very quickly in  
*Stá’lō* territory. Yómalot was able to speak our  
 language, but only with the older people who  
 hadn’t lost it through the residential school.

And though she spoke *Halq’eméylem* to her  
 oldest children, their *Halq’eméylem* faded away  
 with the use of “this White language.”

Yómalot had borne witness to the swift  
 demise of our language, to where now our  
 young people, if they are fortunate, can speak  
 only a few words.

Yómalot offered her services wherever she  
 could make a contribution to reviving our  
 language. She contributed to transmitting the  
 language by teaching *Halq’eméylem* to the  
 young ones at Seabird Island where she  
 worked with some of the older pioneers,  
 many of them gone now. And though she

<p>Both my two oldest ones, they could speak; I had my grandmother here. She [daughter] remembered her words, Even though she got married. That faded away Because of this white language, yeah.</p> <p>We were just so deprived Of speaking our language. We got so used of it. That's how come our younger generations Don't know how to speak Halq'eméylem; It's very few words that they know. My grandson here, He can speak a few words. Sometimes we challenge each other. He used to go to school in Seabird too. We used to go in there, Shirley Norris and I, working up there, Going from classroom to classroom.</p> <p>The little ones, eh? They catch up real easy, And everyone can tell you Their father and mother's name, Where they came from, Tell us how old they are, And who they are. Now, that's the little ones. We sit them around like that, They could speak Halq'eméylem, And that was really, really nice. But whatever happened, They laid me off. I never complain, Never ask questions either, I stayed home. Was '92, yeah, somewhere around there. Two, maybe three years. I just stayed home, Cause it's the way I am. When they tell me they don't need me, I don't ask them why or how come;</p>	<p>many of them gone now. And though she really enjoyed her work there, she eventually got laid off without knowing why and didn't ask. Nonetheless, the word was out that Yómalot was available to help in any way she could, and soon was called to work with <i>Stó:lō Shxwéli</i>. "I've been there ever since," she says. This would have been during a time when Coqualeetza and <i>Stó:lō</i> Nation split, and Coqualeetza and <i>Stó:lō Shxwéli</i> became separated from each other's work in the language.</p> <p>After witnessing the demise of our language to a point of near extinction, Yómalot now bears witness to the emergence of a renewed interest by community members in learning our <i>Halq'eméylem</i> language. Her nieces and nephews are asking questions about the language, and "can speak more words than they ever spoke." <i>Stó:lō Shxwéli</i> students are teaching <i>Halq'eméylem</i> from Langley to</p>
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When I came home, and I told them  
I could speak our language,  
If they needed me, I was available.  
But they never did call me;  
I wasn't going to just go in.  
I'm not that kind of a person  
That just pushes herself in.

At Seabird, I worked with  
Amelia Douglas, Edna Bobb;  
They're both dead.  
And Elizabeth Herrling, Shirley Norris  
(Julian)... and Tillie Gutierrez.  
We were doing what they  
Are doing here now.  
We worked in one room...  
The cultural building.  
Jeff McNeil, yeah, he was the one  
That phoned me, asked me,  
"What are you doing?" he said.  
I says, "nothing," I says,  
'Just sitting around home.'  
"Well, how would you like  
To come with the language, here?"  
"Oh-h," I says, "Okay," I says.  
"I live alone, and I'm my own boss.  
So, how can I get there?" I said.  
"I'll come and pick you up," he said.  
That's when I got started up there, yeah.

When I started with Stó:lō Shxwelí,  
They came and got me.  
Didn't tell me nothing;  
Just told me to go there.  
It was the early one, down Skowkale.  
I told Tessie, I says,  
"I'll help all I can,  
Won't hold nothing back.  
I'll tell all what little I know."  
So, I've been there since,  
After Tessie told me,  
Straightened me out.

Chehalis and elsewhere. And Yómalot's  
greatest rewards? "Every time I see there's  
[Halq'eméylem language] graduations  
... always feel like what we're doing, it's not  
lost, yeah." But despite the gains, Yómalot  
would really like to see more people become  
unafraid and unashamed to take a step toward  
learning Halq'eméylem. She provides  
encouragement to the young people,  
affirming to them that our language comes  
from the Great Spirit. Yómalot reaffirms the  
importance of the relationship between  
Halq'eméylem and our Stó:lō identity.  
"Halq'eméylem is us," she says.

Yómalot has seen the *st'áxem* effect set in so  
strongly in her lifetime to a point where kids  
even today want to deny their Indian-ness.  
Knowing our language, our identity, who we  
are, where we come from can change the  
*st'áxem* effect back to *smelá:lh*, to where we can  
be proud to be Stó:lō, to be First Nations on

My nieces and nephews  
That never knew how to say words,  
And they speak it,  
Though they don't come to the classes.  
That's really good.  
When I get to the smoke house  
And sittin' around,  
They ask me questions,  
Really interested.  
They can speak more words  
Than they ever spoke.

Some of our students is  
Teaching up that way,  
Right down towards Langley.  
I think that's just great.  
And even in Chehalis  
That never bothered before,  
Learnt the words too from over here,  
The ones that's teaching up Chehalis, yeah.  
They still come to me, get  
All kind of informations from me,  
Take it back to Chehalis.  
Yeah, They still agoin'.  
There's a bunch of these Charlies up there,  
And very few Leons.  
I got some cousins there;  
They can speak the language.  
I don't know if they ever go and try  
Help with the language.  
I never asked them if they do.  
I used to baby-sit them when  
They were tiny babies.  
They spoke then.

Rewards?  
Every time I see there's graduations,  
[From Halq'eméylem language classes]  
I feel great, really great.  
I always think what we're doing,  
It's not lost, yeah.  
That's my greatest thanksgiving

this land. We are connected to this land,  
through our language, through our ancestors.

"When other people hear you talking, they  
know where you come from," she says, and  
"I'm proud of my language, my ancestors. I  
want to keep up what they taught us." And  
keeping it up is important for the children,  
"So they know who they are," says Yómalot.  
Yómalot remembers the taunts of long ago,  
when her dad would become angry at being  
called "you bloody Siwash." But Yómalot  
doesn't get discouraged, even after all the  
*st'áxem* effect she has witnessed. She remains  
strong in her convictions in the worth of our  
language and provides support and  
encouragement to all who are struggling to  
learn even one word of Halq'eméylem.

When Yómalot speaks in Halq'eméylem, she  
understands the meaning of words the way  
they were designated within the cultural  
environment from which they were created.



<p>For all of them graduating, That's when I'm happiest, Seeing them graduating, yeah.</p> <p>I really would like some of our students To speak up, Don't be afraid of your nationality, Ashamed of your language, Speak up, and if you make a mistake, It's fine, because you're learning. Learn by your mistakes; Don't be ashamed if you make a mistake.</p> <p>Ohhh, I do hope, really hope, hope to God That our language would come back. One of them came and asked, "How did we get this language?" I says, "You were born with it. People got different languages When Noah's Ark landed, And the people started to build A tower to heaven. The Great Spirit got angry, Tore down the tower, and Gave everybody a different tongue." That's what I tell the ones when they ask, "How did we get our language?" We always had our language. Halq'eméylem is us. I tell my little grandchildren, "Don't be ashamed of who you are." Some of them was saying, "We're not Indians." I say, "Do you think you look Like them White people, up there?" They have no answer for that. "Don't be ashamed of your language, Of who you are. We are the First Nations," I tell them.</p> <p>What I always say, "That's our identity, our language." When other people hear you talking,</p>	<p>She understands the cultural teachings imbedded in the language. She discusses the root word, "mexw" that denotes the interconnectedness of all things. "That one little word, "mexw," it means so much, "she says. The "mexw" is often applied to person or people, such as in Xwélmexw, the word for Indian or First Nations people.</p> <p>"Mestíyexw is people. Smestíyexw is spirit," says Yómalot. Applying how one creates a noun in Halq'eméylem, "mestíyexw" is "to be a people," and by adding an "s" at the beginning, turns it into a noun. In this case, that transformation to "smestíyexw," or "spirit," can be interpreted as being the essence of the person and is in effect the essence, or spirit, in all things. Yómalot is entrenched strongly in her spiritual understanding. She says, "Without smestíyexw, I often think my spirit must get awfully tired luggin' me around sometimes."</p>
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They know where you come from.  
 “Oh, she comes from that place.  
 She comes from Upriver.”  
 That’s how we identify ourselves.  
 When you go up country there,  
 And they hear us talking,  
 Oh, they come from down  
 The lower mainland.  
 And up that way, they hear us talking,  
 Oh, it’s Stswelt talking,  
 They come from Stswelt,  
 That’s the Douglas people.  
 [Port Douglas Lillooet]  
 I speak a little bit of their language too.

I am proud of my language, my ancestors.  
 I want to keep up what they taught us,  
 All the things right and wrong,  
 Different things in our language.  
 We should teach our children too,  
 The right word and the wrong word,  
 So they know who they are, yeah.  
 That’s very important.

Sometimes the white people are harsh.  
 They called us Siwashes.  
 I often wonder too,  
 What does that mean?  
 Went and got my dictionary,  
 Going to look it up,  
 Something else comes up.  
 Still never found out  
 What Siwash meant.  
 Dad used to get really angry.  
 “You bloody Siwash,” somebody  
 Told him that one time.

Joanie, she comes out,  
 “I learned a new word today,”  
 She’d holler it out.  
 Like one of our ancestors,  
 And he used to say,  
 “Don’t get discouraged of what you hear.

Yómalot never fails to express her gratitude for the Creator’s gift of spirit and “for all things he has given us.”

Yómalot easily explains nuances in Halq’eméylem words, such as in “Éyqwlha” and “Yú:wqwlha,” words associated with the term “beautiful.” She provides examples for the use of Éyqwlha which refers the “goodness” of something denoted by the root “Éy.” “Éyqwlha te sqwèlqwels, News is very good.” The term Yú:wqwlha, however, refers more to a sense of “awe” about something. “Like, maybe you have a nice jacket, something nice, or you’re cooking and you show it. Somebody would say, Yú:wqwlha, and that’s very nice, yeah,” says Yómalot.

When she observes spiritual work being conducted in English, she observes, “The teachers talking English to them, they’re teaching English.” In effect, she believes they are being taught English culture by way of the

You gonna remember one word  
In all the teachings, and just be happy  
You learned this one word.  
You accomplished something, there,” yeah.

*Mest̓yexw* means people.  
*Smest̓yexw*, it's spirits.  
I told a few that “*mexw*” is one word.  
It's a ending of *sl̓h̓en̓exw*, rain,  
And *t̓en̓exw* is the earth we walk on,  
And *kw̓en̓exw* is the word “root,”  
Root of all things.  
And the *sl̓h̓en̓exw* is the rain,  
The water that we live off,  
And the *Xw̓el̓mexw* is the people, yeah.  
That one little word *mexw*,  
It means so much.  
*Koy̓l̓en̓exw*, he came and asked,  
When he took that name,  
Wanted to know what *Koy̓l̓en̓exw* means.  
*Koy̓l̓e* is a container.  
You're a container,  
You contain lots of things.  
And *mexw* is the *t̓en̓exw* you walk on,  
And the *kw̓en̓exw* is the root of all things.  
And you wouldn't think so,  
But even the animals come from *mexw*  
I says, *t̓en̓exw*  
Everything we eat off,  
Work on,  
Live on,  
It's all that, *kw̓en̓exw*  
And that *sl̓h̓en̓exw*,  
It's the rain that comes down  
And waters everything we possess.  
Without that water, you cannot survive,  
I says, that to *Koy̓l̓en̓exw*,

*M̓ex̓wya?* Yeah, well,  
That's what you grew off your mother,  
Growing, growing, growing.  
Without that, I don't know  
How you would have eaten,

are being taught English culture by way of the  
language, which cannot easily represent  
*Halq'erey̓len* ways of understanding the world.  
Yómalot shared privately with me a story  
about the meaning of a word that is used in a  
spiritual context. I am not at liberty to  
disclose the story though Yómalot had not  
indicated at the time that it would be taboo to  
share more broadly. Later, when I met with  
her to ask about the appropriateness of  
sharing her story, she stated that it was a  
private story and others might not like it to be  
shared in this public way.

Yómalot hopes our language will be revived.  
“It's our future, great grandchildren coming,  
they shouldn't be lost.” And Yómalot bears  
witness to her own great grandchildren who  
now speak to her in *Halq'erey̓len*. She knows  
what it is like to feel lost, as she had felt a  
tremendous sense of loss during her  
experience in the residential school where

<p>When you were growing.  Oh, yeah. <i>Mexw</i>, that's everything, eh? *  But that's in the beginning  Of everything, there.  That's the <i>mexw</i>, that's you're growing, means  you're growing.  Yeah, right from the beginning.  Words are not just words.  That's just give to us by the great spirit.</p> <p>Without <i>smesthexw</i>, I often think  My spirit must get awfully tired  Luggin' me around sometimes.  Because it's what it is, our spirits,  And our spirits leave our body,  Then we're dead.  That's our Creator's gift, things like that.  I never go to sleep  Without thanking the Great Spirit  For all things he has given us.  That's one thing I never do,  Is go to sleep without thanking him.  And that's the first thing I do  In the morning, is thanking him  For the new day, and thank him  For looking after each one  That is traveling to their destiny,  Things like that,  Watching the children,  Watching the sick,  Especially the helpless ones.  That's one thing I never stop praying for,  Thanking the Great Spirit for all that.</p> <p>Oh, <i>yurulba</i>,  That's when you're proud of something, <i>yicw</i>,  Like, maybe you have a nice jacket,  Something nice, or you're cooking  And you show it. Somebody would say,  <i>yurulba</i>, and that's very nice, yeah.</p> <p><i>Eyulba</i>, that's lots of different things too.  <i>Eyulba</i>, You could be saying,</p>	<p>who she was as a <i>Halq'enyem</i> speaker was  disdained, and where she made a pact with  herself to never, never, never forget her  language. "I was going to be stubborn..."  says Yómalot.</p> <p>* Galloway (2002, p.c.) states that Yomelot's  interpretation of the <i>mexw</i> is a folk  etymology, not completely shared by the  elders he worked with, or by linguists. <i>Mexw</i>  he states, is not a separate word, nor is it the  same as <i>mexw</i>. The <i>-mexw</i> ending means  "person, people" in most cases (i.e. <i>xwelmexw</i>),  and, he states, no other elder reported it in  <i>téméxw</i> to him in thirty years.</p>
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It's very good, you did very good,  
Things like that, *éyqulba*,  
It was very good you said it,  
Or he was very good telling us,  
*Éyqulba te sqwélqwels*,  
News is very good.  
And if somebody fed you,  
*Ō Éyqulba te s'álhtels*,  
Oh this food was very good, yeah,  
Things like that.  
It means lots of different things.  
Even if you're talking about  
What they created,  
Oh, her work was very nice.

Halq'eméylem is very important to me,  
It's our future.  
Our great grandchildren coming,  
They shouldn't be lost.  
I hope this keeps up, on and on.  
Sometimes I talk to my little one, and say,  
"Oh, I hope you gonna teach this language."  
When she comes in the door,  
She goes, "*Lá-aw, éya*."  
When she was two years old  
She used to come in and say that.  
Now she comes in,  
"*Láw*, I missed you Grandma."  
I'm her Great Grandma.

In the smokehouse, now,  
Sometimes they call me to say something,  
Because they don't know how to say it.  
And lots of things they're teaching  
Our teenagers, our young men, young girls,  
Even though in their twenties;  
But they're still very young.  
They don't know how to say this,  
Don't know how to say that,  
And they should know what they're doing.  
A long time ago, 30/40 years ago,  
When one old lady was still alive yet,  
They were teaching these new dancers.

And listening to them,  
 I told this old lady,  
 “*Xweh̄t̄t̄r̄q̄el̄ k̄ew̄ tē t̄w̄es*,” (“The teaching is in  
 the English language anyway,”)  
 I says.  
 “Aww, my,” She says,  
 Tapped me on my knee,  
 Looks at me and she started to laugh.  
 She says, “It’s true what you said,  
*Xwe’it̄ k̄ew̄thē s̄q̄w̄á̄q̄w̄al̄*,” she said.  
 “A long time ago,  
 When they’re teaching these young  
 Dancers, they were taught all our culture,  
 What they’re not supposed to be doing,  
 What they supposed to be doing.  
 And it’s a-all in English,  
 No more Halq’eméylem words,”  
 I told this old lady.  
 I was pretty young at that time.  
 “The teachers talking English to them,  
 They’re teaching English,” I said.  
 The old lady, she says, “Agh,” she said,  
 “It’s true what you’re saying.  
 They do it in English way  
 Instead of a Halq’eméylem way,” yeah.

## *Chapter 8*

### DESSERT OF WILD STRAWBERRIES

I began this labour of love in 1998 to tell the story of Stó:lō community's drive to revive our Halq'eméylem language despite predictions made for its extinction, to document what Halq'eméylem revival means to a community who believe that without our language we will cease to be a unique people. To answer this question, I examined the experiences of nine individuals involved in learning the language in order to transmit it to others. My questions were aimed at finding out what Halq'eméylem renewal means in the context of their lives. More specifically, I set out to determine how specific events in the context of peoples' lives illustrate what is meant by:

1. language is central to cultural identity
2. language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective social adjustment,
3. language expresses the worldview of its speakers

These promises, promulgated in the Stó:lō Halq'eméylem language mission statement, indeed, have shown to be manifest in the lives of the Halq'eméylem revivalists as illustrated in their "poetic monologues." The story of what happened to Halq'eméylem, and to all Aboriginal languages, is a story all Canadians need to know and understand in order to support our efforts morally and financially to revitalize them and to celebrate bringing the gifts inherent in our languages home to the people, and to all Canadians so we can all bask in the splendour of their beauty.

The co-researchers' stories in this study have shown how strongly they feel about learning the language, how it transformed their lives from *st'áxem*, not knowing who they were as Stó:lō people, to *smelá:lh*, growing in knowing their Stó:lō identity and worldview through language revitalization. Their stories have shown how the Halq'eméylem revivalists bravely transcended their fears, anxieties and insecurities associated with the language work. Their stories have illustrated their intense commitment, sacrifice, and tremendous personal effort to learn and teach Halq'eméylem, to use it in their daily lives, and to transmit it to the next generations. They have shown a deep reverence and spiritual understanding of the precious Halq'eméylem knowledge over which they have become stewards.

Though each of the co-researchers' experiences with the language are unique, our collective experiences as Stó:lō people reflect a holographic quality where the whole is reflected in all the parts. Historical developments, such as Canada's assimilation aim, and the demise of our language and cultural traditions, are reflected similarly in each co-researcher's story. I coined the term "st'áxem effect," to refer to the effect on Stó:lō people when we do not know our history, do not know our culture; and how the st'áxem effect hurts our sense of identity. "Becoming smelá:lh" refers to reconnecting with our history, language, and culture to rebuild a strong sense of identity in being Stó:lō, "becoming worthy."

The "poetic monologues" reveal how reconnecting with our Halq'eméylem language through the various means illustrated can serve to bring healing to our community, to bring pride in our identity, strengthening what it means to be Stó:lō, to be "people of the River." For a long time we did not know how it was, or why, that even though our skins were brown, and we



were called “Indian,” we spoke “that white language (Yómalot).” Even “white” people had no idea of what had happened to us. They would ask, “Do you speak your language (Koyàlemót, Xwelíxwiya)?” The situation was confusing for everyone. In this way, the hurt of one people hurt all the people. We are coming out of a dark era, acknowledging and facing what happened to our language and culture, and our rightful Stó:lō identity is resurfacing. As Xwelíxwiya states, “It just has to burst through!”

The elders have watched the world of Halq’eméylem diminish swiftly before their very eyes, swiftly slipping away to be replaced by English. Of all the participants, the elders, who have once seen the language flourish, are the most skeptical that it will become fully revived again. Siyàmiyatéliyot has been involved in the work of Halq’eméylem renewal for thirty years and has witnessed only a few people become moderately fluent speakers of Halq’eméylem. That unfortunate fact is fair grounds for skepticism. Siyàmiyatéliyot and Yómalot have seen people struggle with uttering even a few words and phrases in Halq’eméylem. Nonetheless, they never fail to give themselves to the work of Halq’eméylem revival; they never give up.

We can be grateful to Yómalot and Siyàmiyatéliyot who shared their experiences of how they managed to “put it [Halq’eméylem] away (Siyàmiyatéliyot),” despite the residential schools’ aim to make them forget Halq’eméylem, and to forget that they were Xwélmexw. Because of their tenacity, their “stubbornness (Yómalot),” we have been able to arrive at the level of development in Halq’eméylem revival we are at today. The elders were determined to keep Halq’eméylem alive inside their minds and hearts, while it swiftly slipped away all around them. We raise our hands in thanks and respect to them for their great feat. When Halq’eméylem

revival began in the early '70s and beyond, the elders stepped forward and dedicated their lives relentlessly and unconditionally to this important effort. Their love for the language and the people shines through in their work and in the words they shared.

The elders are the main source of inspiration for the Halq'eméylem revivalists who are picking up the language, to "put it away" in their own minds and hearts for future generations to come. The new Halq'eméylem revivalists, all who are learning Halq'eméylem and transmitting what they know to others, look to the elders for solace when the cause seems unattainable, or difficult. They are ever inspired at how the elders never quit though difficulties may arise. These few elders who remain who are fluent in Halq'eméylem will be gone one day soon. This knowledge strikes fear in the hearts of the ones charged with carrying the language forward. The Halq'eméylem revivalists will then be on their own. They are the ones who will bear responsibility for taking the breath of our language from the remaining fluent elders and breathing it into the young ones coming up. This realization saddens the hearts of those who have gained so much from the elders, who yet feel like babies, worried whether they can stand alone without the support of the fluent elders. It is they who must now stand up and support the legacy of the elders and ancestors, though at this time they may feel wobbly in the knees. "It's a race against time," says T'it'elem Spá:th, who is learning what he can of the language in any way shape or form. Nonetheless, the spirits of our ancestors and elders will carry on in the Halq'eméylem revivalists through work conducted over the past thirty years to preserve the voices of our ancestors on tapes and CDs, now available in the Stó:lō Nation Archives.

The Junior Elders, baby boomers, are the warriors, promoters, supporters, champions of the language work. They have lived long enough to be wise, and to direct that wisdom to work for the common good. The younger Halq'eméylem teachers look to them for their leadership and experience. They may not have the benefit of gaining full fluency in the language for themselves in their lifetime, but they will be good role models and show the younger ones that it is worth their time and effort to learn Halq'eméylem and to be proud of it. They will make every effort to learn what they can, especially if the recordings of the elders made 1970-2002 can be made transformed into more accessible learning tools. In many ways, they have come to terms with the hurts of the st'áxem effect. They can be patient with the time it takes to remember and honour the legacy of language and culture passed on by the elders and ancestors before them.

The Parents with children at home are the most hopeful for a future that will include Halq'eméylem being spoken by their children and grandchildren. These are the ones who will be carrying the responsibility for the revival of intergenerational transmission of Halq'eméylem as they teach their children in the natural settings of their homes. They are bursting through the old st'áxem stereotypes with a passion, so their children and grandchildren will know who they are as Stó:lō people, as people of S'ólh Téméxw.

As each Halq'eméylem revivalist grows in the language, it creates a ripple effect of first an acknowledgement that our language is worth speaking, then arriving at a place of being able to put those first words on our tongues, and healing our sense of who we are as Stó:lō people. The first seeds were planted during the earlier Skulkayn Heritage Project days when elders and

other community members determined that something needed to be done to document and preserve the language. Halq'eméylem “burst through” the hard seed with the work of the Coqualeetza elders, and with the help of linguist, Brent Galloway, who continues his work in the revival effort today. Some of the seeds began to bloom with the establishment of the early Skowkale Halq'eméylem Language Immersion Program. The only requirement of the participants was that they have a desire to learn the language to become teachers of the language. Some twenty people stepped forward to “hold up” the language legacy left from the elders and ancestors, to “put it away” in their minds, and carry it forward to future generations. The Skowkale Immersion project spawned four Halq'eméylem levels for community members, and more seeds were planted. The Skowkale Immersion Program developed into the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq'eméylem Language Program which houses the community Halq'eméylem levels, and expanded to offer further training for Halq'eméylem revivalists. The effort experienced growing pains; they were breaking new ground with each new initiative. However all of their efforts came together, and the people established “a movement afoot (T'it'elem Spá:th)” “to pick it [Halq'eméylem] up,” to “hold it up again (Tyrone).”

The language, embedded in the collective memory of Stó:lō people, feels natural to them. “It seems natural today (Tyrone,)” “it wasn't anything different; it was just the way mom said things (Épele).” Even a few words and phrases heard in times gone by was enough to give some people a strong sense of the language and its sounds. What little was spoken, was remembered as being spoken with a great deal of pride, “when they talk, they strut,” says Xwelíxwiya. This little bit of language shone through the st'áxem effect in some cases,

planting a seed of Stó:lō identity that with a little nourishment and enlightenment, grew into the Halq'eméylem revivalist movement we see today.

The challenges of Halq'eméylem revival are many, but not so insurmountable that they cannot be overcome, and the learning curve is great. It is difficult to learn a language when there are so few people in the entire world one can talk to, and when there are so few easily accessible text and audio-visual resources upon which to draw. The work needs to be concentrated with much sacrifice from the ones who take it on. It's a noble and honourable effort and often not greatly appreciated by others outside the work. It will not be fully appreciated until Halq'eméylem revival comes to full fruition. Everyone will be able to see and appreciate the beauty, power and wonder of the rich heritage embedded in our Halq'eméylem language. More people will begin to understand and appreciate the work and sacrifice of the Halq'eméylem revivalists, and the revivalists can feel full satisfaction with themselves for the legacy they are carrying forward for the elders and ancestors.

The fluent speaking elders can appreciate deeply how our Stó:lō culture and worldview is embedded in our Halq'eméylem language. This knowledge is being passed on to the rest of us today, how our land, language and selves are inextricably interrelated, how spirit permeates everything and how these concepts are expressed best in our Halq'eméylem language. When we begin to understand these precious gifts, our hearts soar, our emotions are stirred, and we feel the healing of coming to know ourselves as Stó:lō people, River people, as Xwélmexw. We become knowledgeable in how to express our love and affection for our people and for Riverways, through our songs and prayers in Halq'eméylem. We come to learn that respect is

the fundamental philosophical value that ties all things into one interrelated creation. Halq'eméylem is being spoken today in this Riverworldview. People are introducing themselves using Halq'eméylem names, talking about their history, saying who they are related to, where they are from. Events are being opened with prayers said in Halq'eméylem; Halq'eméylem is used during traditional ceremonies. People in S'ólh Téméxw are addressing each other informally when they meet, and speak what they know to each other.

We have gained immensely in our understanding of how our culture is embedded in the language, yet we know that a tremendous amount has been lost, so much so that some fear that in learning to speak our language, “instead of being unique Stó:lō people, we'll be people who speak Halq'eméylem (Tyroné).” Yes, with what was lost, we will indeed “lose a part of our identity (Tyroné).” But, on the other hand, it is not all lost, and we will surely have captured the important essences of meaning in our language. We need to come to terms with managing our ancient, yet persistent language, in a contemporary context, in a context where settler languages have prominence over ours, and in a context of global communication where endangered languages draw little, if any, attention. Maybe our language will evolve into a kind of “Halq'eméylish” as Katelíla describes the prospect, and she is perfectly comfortable with the idea. Languages do mesh, but this does not mean that they must necessarily lose their uniqueness.

The new speakers and teachers of Halq'eméylem are sometimes criticized for not speaking the language correctly, or for pronouncing words incorrectly. Again, it must be remembered that we are Halq'eméylem babies at this stage. The Halq'eméylem revivalists understand fully their

limitations with the language. Further, it must also be remembered that languages evolve. English today, for example is not spoken the way it was 100 years ago. We have new terminology, new slang, and so on. What was considered incorrect speaking at one time is now considered acceptable in certain circumstances, or is defined as a common usage in contemporary times, i.e. “ain’t.” We cannot say that “ain’t” ain’t in the dictionary anymore (chuckle). Bringing new contemporary terminology to the Halq’eméylem language will be challenging for the Halq’eméylem revivalists. Though challenging, it is not necessarily so that these changes will diminish the uniqueness of Halq’eméylem in any way. Our ancestors were creative in developing our language; we too can be creative.

Some of the challenges to Halq’eméylem renewal refer to the new technological terms that are being created at a fast pace in our contemporary times. And though we might bemoan the ills of modern technology, it is modern technology that may be a boon to Halq’eméylem revitalization. We can now digitize the elders’ words for posterity. We can listen repeatedly to the same words and phrases over and over; we can jump around from one word or phrase to another easily on a CD ROM.<sup>224</sup> We can even see animated images that show us how our physiology works when we make certain sounds.<sup>225</sup> We can make learning Halq’eméylem fun with games on CD ROM.<sup>226</sup> These kinds of resources have been developed. We can put Halq’eméylem on the web to create greater accessibility of the language.<sup>227</sup> “We got

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<sup>224</sup> Seabird Island Community School. (2001). *Chólóle*. An interactive CD ROM.

<sup>225</sup> Stó:lō Nation. (2001). *Halq’eméylem Sounds*. An interactive CD ROM developed by the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq’eméylem Language Program. Illustrated by Catherine Burton, Programmed by Jason Forseth.

<sup>226</sup> Stó:lō Nation. (2000). *Spirit of the Stó:lō*. Interactive CD ROM designed and developed by Strang Burton.

<sup>227</sup> Gerds and Compton (2002) *Native Peoples, Plants & Animals: Halkomelem*. [www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology](http://www.sfu.ca/halk-ethnobiology).

technology, so why can't we use those on-line," says Katelíla, "So every day I check my hotmail, I'm doing Halq'eméylem, signed "w' sɪɔŋɔ, your friend." We can use the technology that our children are becoming ever more expert at using; we can involve children in developing technological resources. And it is ultimately the children, their future children, and their children's children, that we remember when we make the sacrifices that we do today, remembering the sacrifices and challenges our elders and ancestors had to make.

Not too long ago, fluent elders were placed with young children and youth in the schools to teach them Halq'eméylem. Though the children's parents did not have the language to reinforce it at home, the language the children learned will have remained protected in the seeds that were planted, to emerge at a later time when their interest in Halq'eméylem grows. The young ones at the time, exposed as they were to Halq'eméylem, will have established some familiarity with the sounds, words and phrases in Halq'eméylem that will help them along when they later become "hungry for the language." The efforts were not in vain; though an intergenerational gap in language transmission needed to be addressed.

As a result of all the past work and sacrifice, Halq'eméylem is being taught to children on many fronts – in two Kindergarten classrooms in the Chilliwack School district; in Headstart programs; at Skwah, Matsqui, Sumas, and Chawathil Bands; and at Seabird Island and Chehalis Schools. Most importantly, we can see that Halq'eméylem is being transmitted from parent to child in the natural setting of the home.

*I teach my own kids. Sometimes they're not good. I mean like I scold them. 'Ené!ha!  
Ené! I would tell them, Sit down Katelíla*



When we first want to learn Halq'eméylem, we usually want to learn it for our own sake, to connect for ourselves a sense of who we are, to become healed and whole as Stó:lō people, as Xwélmexw, as People of the River. The greatest reward for Halq'eméylem revivalists is to see the fruits of their labour expressed in the children, who are echoing the legacy of our ancestors as they speak, pray and sing in Halq'eméylem.

### ***Conclusion and Implications***

As a Stó:lō researcher my ruminations throughout the study were based on my personal experience of trying to understand the phenomenon of what happened to our language, and grew into a passion to delve ever more deeply into understanding what Halq'eméylem means to Stó:lō people. My own experiences mirror those of the co-researchers in my study who also wrestled with ambivalence over the issue of identity. What did it mean to be “Indian?” We did not know any “Indian” language, or stories, or traditional ceremonies. At least, that was the case for most of us for a period of time. Many of our people today continue to struggle with these questions. We discovered we are Stó:lō, that our language is Halq'eméylem, and that there is a rich and powerful heritage attached to being Stó:lō. With this knowledge, we finally came home to the River, to the Stó:lō, and realized that we and the River are one identity. Our language tells us so.

We have gained a brief glimpse of our Riverworldview and begin to feel intimately connected to who we are as Stó:lō people, People of the River. By reconnecting with our language and culture, we can re-create Riverworldview into its meaning for us in a contemporary context.

We need our *Xwélméxwéqel* and *Sxwíxwíyám* to be made visible to our collective consciousness once again, to be learned by all our community members, and incorporated in all our educational learning environments. The young children especially need to learn the beauty and wonder reflected in our language and culture, because they are the ones who will carry this legacy of our ancestors forward for the benefit of future generations. Everyone can share our pride and connection with S'ólh Téméxw in this Riverworldview way, appreciating the Stó:lō 's contribution to the “full creative capacities of the human mind.”<sup>228</sup>

An aesthetic approach in this study was useful for examining the Stó:lō 's Riverworldview illuminated in the Stó:lō Halq'eméylem aesthetic, a culmination of thousands upon thousands of years of invention, innovation and creativity reflected in the language. The implications of Halq'eméylem revitalization is that the legacy of invention and creativity of a Stó:lō aesthetic can continue on into the future. Kenny's aesthetics was useful for framing the co-researchers' role in their efforts to revive Halq'eméylem to achieve wholeness of identity for themselves as individuals, continuing the legacy of interconnectedness and interrelationship with S'ólh Téméxw. Once again, as in the holographic quality described earlier, achieving a sense of wholeness for the individual Stó:lō means achieving wholeness for a Stó:lō people and resurfacing the legacy of a whole Riverworldview aesthetic.

The elders have shown us how our identity is interrelated with the land. The chapter “S'ólh Téméxw” explores this topic in depth. The elders have shown us eloquently how our identity, culture and land are embedded in the language. The chapter “Singing the Robin's Song”

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<sup>228</sup> Mithun, p. 189.

explores how Stó:lō worldview, River Culture, is expressed in our beautiful Halq'eméylem language. The elders' teachings and the Halq'eméylem revivalists' stories illustrate how our language tells us about our relationship to the land, to each other, and to spirit in a contemporary context. Understanding the Stó:lō people's Riverworldview of undeniable interconnectedness and interrelationship with the land expressed in Halq'eméylem is critical to negotiating Aboriginal Rights and Land Claims, to reclaiming S'ólh Téméxw and all that it represents.

Let's now review Bauman's classification that illustrated how Halq'eméylem is verging on obsolescence. *Only a few older adults speak the language fluently.* Yes, this is true for Halq'eméylem, and the few elders we have are dedicated, committed and contribute tirelessly to the revival effort. *The language is not taught to children in the home.* No, we cannot say this is completely true anymore. The most important factor in making Halq'eméylem a functional living language is transmission of the language from parent to child in the home. The Halq'eméylem revivalist parents are making this happen. A growing number of adults are learning Halq'eméylem through the community program and many of those people are teaching their children and/or grandchildren. Parents and children in the Headstart Program are learning the language. Children who are learning the language are forcing learning on adult family members who need to understand what they are saying. *The number of fluent speakers declines as the population increases.* Yes, this is true at this time; however, increasing numbers of new speakers are now working to become *highly fluent* in Halq'eméylem through the Intensive Halq'eméylem Language Fluency Program. Students in this program dedicate five hours a day five days a

week to learning Halq'eméylem to become fluent. *English is the preferred language in most situations.* Yes, English continues to be the language of *use* in most situations; however, “preferred” might not be the right term here. Many Stó:lō youth would choose Halq'eméylem over any other language as their second language requirement in school. With greater opportunities to learn and use the language, Halq'eméylem will be the preferred language of use for many people. *There are minimal literacy skills (reading and writing) among fluent speakers.* Yes, this is true. We have few fluent speakers who are also literate in Halq'eméylem; however, the movement toward creating highly fluent speakers includes literacy skills, and use of modern technology. Participants in the Halq'eméylem linguistics classes, offered through the SFU and Secwepemc Cultural Education Society, gain intricate knowledge in the analysis and structure of Halq'eméylem; they learn how to read and write in the language.

This study concludes that Halq'eméylem is a viable part of modern Indigenous lifestyles. The Halq'eméylem revivalists are making it happen, as they work diligently and tirelessly at reversing the trend toward its extinction. During the relatively short period of time since the Skulkayn Heritage Project was established thirty years ago, Stó:lō people have persisted against all odds to develop a multi-dimensional Halq'eméylem revival movement to “*hold our language high.*” Stó:lō people are speaking Halq'eméylem throughout S'ólh Téméxw, echoing the spirit of our ancestors, echoing the spirit of the River, the Stó:lō. The Halq'eméylem revivalists' stories have shown us that learning our Halq'eméylem language reconnects us with our Riverworldview aesthetic, restoring us to wholeness as Stó:lō, people of the River. *Yúwpuhlhal!*

The implications of the fledgling Halq'eméylem revival effort are that much work still needs to be done to revive our language, and that we need the means to keep the momentum going do it. We need to escalate the work of recording our elders speaking onto audio and video media, so that future generations can enjoy the full benefit of experiencing our language in its purest form. The existing audio taped resources need to be transformed into accessible learning resources available to all Stó:lō community members. Halq'eméylem needs to be taught in all the schools on our traditional Stó:lō territory, and resourced with vibrant, engaging curriculum materials utilizing the best language learning practices known. Halq'eméylem on Stó:lō territory requires the same attention and recognition as French, and considered equal to English and French as an official language, and equally financially supported in the school system. We need to hold the Halq'eméylem revivalists in high esteem by ensuring that they are provided with the best language training available and are supported generously to allow them the freedom to pursue the highest levels of Halq'eméylem fluency possible. Greater numbers of highly fluent speakers will enable the possibility of establishing language nests similar to the Maori in Aotearoa. Highly fluent speakers with high quality training in language teaching will enable the possibility of establishing Halq'eméylem immersion schools such as the Chief Atahm School. More importantly, we need adequate resources to mobilize programs to raise the consciousness of every Stó:lō man, woman and child, of the benefits of learning Halq'eméylem, and of how it can restore wholeness to our identity and self-esteem as Stó:lō people.

Our Halq'eméylem revival efforts need to be financed comprehensively and continuously until we arrive at functional fluency in our communities. It is our Aboriginal right to speak Halq'eméylem, a right that was taken away from us through Canadian legislation and policy for which our leaders must seek redress through treaty negotiations. The Canadian government has a moral responsibility to justly compensate the loss of our language by financing it until it is revived to our satisfaction and can be maintained for the benefit of future generations. Our leaders could benefit by being trained in Halq'eméylem in order to gain a deep understanding of how our language identifies us as the people of S'ólh Téméxw, and to understand how thousands of years of living in a *harmony with* relationship with the land is evident in the way we name our places, sacred sites and the flora and fauna. Our Halq'eméylem language was borne of the land; this knowledge serves to strengthen our land claims, our claims to S'ólh Téméxw. By learning Halq'eméylem and its intricacies, our leaders will be able to advocate for what we need to maintain our unique Stó:lō identity embedded in our Halq'eméylem Riverworldview aesthetic. By reviving our Halq'eméylem language, we serve to strengthen the individual Stó:lō, our families and communities, and society in general. *Á:yléxw te Stó:lō Shxwéł.*

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## **Appendices**

- I. Letter dated February 10, 1998 to Gwen Point requesting permission to conduct my research with Stó:lō Nation members.
- II. Stó:lō Nation Research Registry
  - a. Request to complete Research Registry
  - b. Registry form signed by Stó:lō Nation Executive Director, Clarence Pennier
  - c. Attachment of a brief research description
- III. Stó:lō Nation Research Registry Purpose and Procedure and Stó:lō Nation Archives: Oral Interview Consent and Release Form
- IV. Letter dated November 6, 2000 from Dr. James, R.P. Ogloff Re: University Research Ethics Review Committee approval
- V. Description of Research Project and Research Instrument
- VI. Informed Consent for Research Participants form
- VII. Letter dated November 13, 2001 to co-researchers requesting their feedback on how their data was presented.

February 10, 1998

Gwen Point, Education Manager  
Sto:lo Nation  
5 - 7201 Vedder Rd.  
P.O. Box 280  
Sardis B.C. V2R 1A7  
Phone: (604) 858-0662  
Fax: (604) 858-7692

Dear Gwen,

I am pursuing doctoral studies under special arrangements with Simon Fraser University. My proposed topic of research is "Sto:lo Halq'emeylem Language Renewal." I was inspired to pursue my topic while participating in the Linguistics course with the students from the Sto:lo Shxweli Program. I was deeply impressed and touched by the dedication of all the people involved in working toward reviving our language. In the Anthropology course that Gordon Mohs is teaching, and I am participating in it as well, students expressed how important learning the language has been in their lives. I have read about why it is important to revive our language, about what can result from the effort (i.e. increased self-esteem, connection to culture) and about what we can do to revive an "endangered" language such as Halq'emeylem. I then thought how useful it would be to know what the Sto:lo Halq'emeylem language means in the context of Sto:lo peoples' lives today, which has become the main research question I want to pursue.

I am thrilled to be a part of this community phenomenon and excited about the prospect of pursuing research on the topic I have chosen. I am proposing to use a research method called "portraiture" which combines rigorous empirical considerations with aesthetic expression, and is intended to be accessible to broader audiences than just academy. I want to write a document that community members will want to read. I had the wonderful opportunity of taking a course from Harvard Professor Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot who developed the "portraiture" method.

I have just recently submitted my proposal to conduct doctoral work with SFU under Special Arrangements, an arrangement which will allow me some flexibility regarding course work and the such. I already completed two years of doctoral level work at Harvard University. Working with SFU will be more convenient for me, and I

believe there is more sensitization to what I want to do among the faculty considering Secwepemc's (SCES) affiliation and Shxweli's affiliation as well. In addition, Dr. Joann Archibald who is a graduate alum from SFU has agreed to be on my supervisory committee.

I understand that you are the person to contact in terms of getting permission to conduct my research. Please advise me as to what I need to do. I will be in Chilliwack every Friday taking two courses this term, and you can call me at my work number, (604) 822-8942, or email me at [egardner@unixg.ubc.ca](mailto:egardner@unixg.ubc.ca), or fax me at: (604) 822-8944. I Look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience.

Respectfully,

Ethel Gardner





**Stó:lō Nation**

Bldg. #1 - 7201 Vedder Road, Chilliwack, B.C. Canada V2R 4G5  
Tel: 604-858-3366 Fax: 604-824-5226

**FACSIMILE COVER LETTER**

FAX #: 604-822-8944	
NAME: ETHEL GARDNER	URGENT:
FIRM: FIRST NATIONS HOUSE OF LEARNING, UBC	As requested:
CITY:	For your Info:
FROM: DAVID SMITH	Please Reply: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DATE: FEBRUARY 26, 1998	
RE: REQUEST TO DO RESEARCH @ STÓ:LŌ NATION	

**SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS:**

DEAR MS. GARDNER,

PLEASE COMPLETE THIS RESEARCH REGISTRY FORM AND RETURN IT TO ME AT THE FAX NO. GIVEN ABOVE (ATTENTION: DAVID SMITH). YOUR A LETTER TO GIVEN POINT WILL BE ATTACHED TO THE FORM. THANK YOU.

-DAVID SMITH

ARCHIVIST, DEPT OF ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND TITLE

Original Sent by Mail:  Yes  No

We are transmitting 1 pages (excluding this cover letter).

If you do not receive all the pages PLEASE TELEPHONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

**SENDER:** Ph: (604) 858-3366 Fax: (604) 824-5226

The information contained in this transmission is confidential and intended only for the use of the individual or office as indicated. If you have received this transmission in error please notify the above office immediately and return the original to the noted address above. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.



STÓ:LO NATION CULTURAL HERITAGE RESEARCH REGISTRY

Name(s) of Investigator(s): ETHEL B. GARDNER

Institutional Affiliation: SFU

Title of Research Project: STO:LO HALQ'EMEYLEM LANGUAGE RENEWAL

"Without our language, we will cease to be a unique people"

Research Period (DDMMYY to DDMMYY): ASAP to Spring or Fall 1999

Discipline/Field of Research Interest: Interdisciplinary, Language renewal, culture studies, anthropology, history, education

Please provide a brief, plain-language description of your research project, outlining the questions being addressed, methodology and anticipated outcome. Describe explicitly how this project concerns the cultural heritage of the Stó:lō people.

Attached

FEED FAX THIS END

**FAX**

To: David Smith  
 Dept.: Ab. Rights, Stó:lō N.  
 Fax No.: 824-5226  
 No. of Pages: 3  
 From: Ethel Gardner  
 Date: March 10, 1998  
 Company: FNHL  
 Fax No.: (604) 922-8946  
 Comments: Original sent by mail.

Post-It      fax pad 7903E

(continue on separate sheet if necessary)

\* \* \*

The Stó:lō Nation provides official endorsement of this project, and its officers believe that this research is meaningful to the Stó:lō people. The researcher(s) agrees to complete a Stó:lō Nation Oral Interview Consent and Release Form and provide the Stó:lō Nation with copies of all data collected and reports produced.

Stó:lō Nation Executive Director: [Signature]

Researcher: Ethel Gardner      March 10, 1998

March 10, 1998

0

Research Project

**“Without Our Language, We Will Cease to Exist as a Unique People”  
STO:LO HALQ’EMEYLEM LANGUAGE RENEWAL,**

In my study, I want to focus on the Sto:lo people of Coqualeetza and Shxweli who are dedicated to reviving the Sto:lo Halq’emeylem language, and those Sto:lo people associated with and affected by these initiatives.

My main research question is

- What does language renewal mean in the context of the peoples’ lives whose language is being renewed? in this case, to the Sto:lo community.

The purpose of my proposed research is to tell the story of a community’s drive to revive their language despite predictions for its extinction, to document what this effort means to a community of people who believe that without the language they will cease to be a unique people, and finally, to illustrate how this revival effort directly affects peoples’ lives. I want to explore how specific events in the context of peoples lives illustrate what is meant by

language is central to cultural identity...  
language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective  
social adjustment..., and  
language expresses the world view of its speakers  
(Siyamtelot, 1988:2).

As such, I hope to reveal in what ways the language delivers the promises promulgated in the Sto:lo Halq’emeylem Language mission statement.

Methods. The research method that I will use is called “*Portraiture*,” a method which is

designed to capture the richness, complexity, and dimensionality of human experience in social and cultural context, conveying the perspectives of the people who are negotiating those experiences. The portraits are shaped through dialogue between the portraitist and the subject, each one participating in the drawing of the image. The encounter between the two is rich with meaning and resonance and is crucial to the success and authenticity of the rendered piece (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997: 3).

# Stó:lō Nation Research Registry Purpose and Procedures

## ABORIGINAL RIGHTS AND TITLE

### Purpose

The purpose of the research registry is to ensure that Stó:lō history and culture are interpreted accurately and respectfully. All outside researchers pursuing projects which may involve Stó:lō Nation staff advice and/or participation should be registered. Researchers who plan to involve Stó:lō community members should also register their research proposals with Stó:lō Nation so that we can provide guidance to ensure that interviews are conducted in an appropriate manner, and to appraise community members of the nature of the project.

### Application Procedures

1. Upon request, the Archivist in the Aboriginal Rights and Title Department (AR&T) will send the applicant(s) the Stó:lō Nation Research Registry Application forms. Completed forms should be returned to the Archivist along with a cheque or money order for \$20 (individuals) or \$100 (companies and organizations) to cover processing costs. There are no fees for Stó:lō community members.

*All applications and fees should be sent to:*

David Smith  
Stó:lō Nation  
Bldg. #1 - 7201 Vedder Road  
Chilliwack, B.C. V2R 4G5

2. The Archivist will ensure that at a minimum of three appropriate staff members are asked to review the request and to complete a Research Registry Review form within two weeks. Titles of Research Registry topics will be posted on a regular basis in the event that other staff members wish to participate in the review process.
3. These reviews will then be forwarded to the appropriate Executive Director for a decision on whether or not Stó:lō Nation wishes to be officially involved in the project.

4. The Executive Director will send a letter to the researcher(s) indicating whether or not their proposal has been approved.
5. At the discretion of the Executive Director, a teleconference or meeting *may* be arranged between the researcher(s) and the Executive Director and/or the reviewers.
6. A copy of the researcher's final report should be submitted to the Sto:lo Nation Archives upon completion.

For further information please contact the Archivist, AR&T.

# Stó:lō Nation Archives: Oral Interview Consent and Release Form

Acc. No: \_\_\_\_\_

TITLE OF INTERVIEW OR ACCESSION: \_\_\_\_\_

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to the recording of an interview of myself. I agree that this interview may be kept on magnetic tape, transcribed, printed, and/or published by Stó:lō Nation or its agents.

I understand that this interview will be kept by the Stó:lō Nation Archives and will be used in accordance with the policies and principles of the Stó:lō Nation Heritage and Archives policies. Any conditions on the use of this material are described below.

Conditions:

\_\_\_ None

\_\_\_ I would like a cassette tape copy of the interview and I reserve the right to correct or add material to the interview within two months of my receiving the copied recording.

\_\_\_ Other (describe): \_\_\_\_\_

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Archivist: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date(s) of interview(s): \_\_\_\_\_

# SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

OFFICE OF VICE-PRESIDENT, RESEARCH



BURNABY, BRITISH COLUMBIA  
CANADA V5A 1S6  
Telephone: (604) 291-4370  
FAX: (604) 291-4860

November 6, 2000

Ms. Ethel B. Gardner  
322-7694 Evans Road  
Chilliwack, B.C.  
V2R 3W3

Dear Ms. Gardner:

**Re: "Without Our Language, We will Cease to Exist as a Unique People:"  
Stó:lo Halq'eméylem Language Renewal**

I am pleased to inform you that the above referenced Request for Ethical Approval of Research has been approved on behalf of the University Research Ethics Review Committee. This approval is in effect for twenty-four months from the above date. Any changes in the procedures affecting interaction with human subjects should be reported to the University Research Ethics Review Committee. Significant changes will require the submission of a revised Request for Ethical Approval of Research. This approval is in effect only while you are a registered SFU student.

Best wishes for success in this research.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James R.P. Ogloff".

Dr. James, R.P. Ogloff, Chair  
University Research Ethics Review Committee

c: C. Kenny, Supervisor

/bjr

## DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

### **“Without Our Language, We Will Cease to Exist as a Unique People:” Stó:lō Halq’eméylem Language Renewal**

Contact: Ethel B. Gardner, Doctoral Candidate, Special Arrangements Program,  
Simon Fraser University

Thank you for participating in an interview for the above entitled research.

In this project, I aim to explore how the near extinct Halq’eméylem language manifests in the lives of Stó:lō people today who are working to rebuild the Halq’eméylem language into a functional, living language once again. This fall 2000 I will be conducting interviews with participants, including elders, of the Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq’eméylem Language Program. The Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq’eméylem Language Program is administered under the Stó:lō Nation which represents 19 of the 24 Stó:lō First Nations.

My main question is “What does the Halq’eméylem language mean in the context of Stó:lō peoples’ lives today?” The Stó:lō Shxwelí Halq’eméylem Language Program is working to revive Halq’eméylem despite projections for its extinction, and their efforts are significant in that they are creating a movement to reverse the direction toward language death at this critical stage. Through in-depth interviews, I will be asking participants about their experiences in this important work to bring to light how Halq’eméylem is used in the context of Stó:lō peoples’ everyday lives, how it is used in the community. More importantly, I want to investigate how the language identifies who we are in a contemporary cultural context, and how it reflects our worldview today. I also want to explore what inspires people to learn a language that is no longer a viable part of modern indigenous lifestyles.

This research will use an aesthetic approach to writing up the analysis of data collected. Participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback on how the information they share is presented in the research project. This research is registered with the Stó:lō Nation archives, and the completed research thesis will be provided to the participants as well as being submitted to the Stó:lō archives which is available to all Stó:lō people and to the public.

You will be asked to complete consent forms. Be sure to read them carefully, as you will have the choice to have your name included in the study, or not. Some people like to have their names attached to their stories. Some prefer confidentiality.

Once again, thank you for your participation. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at Home: (604) 824-5664 or Work: (604) 824-5216, email: [ethel.gardner@stolonation.bc.ca](mailto:ethel.gardner@stolonation.bc.ca), or [gardnet@home.com](mailto:gardnet@home.com)



## RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

### **“Without Our Language, We Will Cease to Exist as a Unique People:” Stó:lō Halq’eméylem Language Renewal**

The purpose of this interview is to explore how the Halq’eméylem language is manifest in the cultural context of Stó:lō peoples’ contemporary lives. The following list of questions will be used to *guide* our conversation, beginning with exploring your earliest memories of exposure to Halq’eméylem, to how you arrived at wanting to learn and/or teach Halq’eméylem, and to a discussion of what Halq’eméylem speech events and opportunities mean in your life today.

#### **Guiding Questions for Stó:lō Shxwelí participants**

1. When did you first become aware of the Halq’eméylem language? What are your earliest memories of Halq’eméylem? Was it spoken around you? In what kinds of situations? What were your thoughts about the language then?
2. How did you arrive at wanting to learn Halq’eméylem? Why was it important? What did you do? Why did you not learn Halq’eméylem earlier? What does knowing Halq’eméylem do for you? Please describe the learning experience. Who taught you? In what context? What means? How easy, or hard, was it to learn?
3. What is your level of Halq’eméylem fluency today? What opportunities do you have to speak Halq’eméylem? When? With whom? Where? Why? Please describe these speaking events in detail. How do you feel about speaking Halq’eméylem in these events? In your experience, how do people react to your speaking the language? How do you feel about these reactions?
4. What are you doing to transmit the learning of Halq’eméylem to others? Teaching? In the home? In the community? At work? Please describe how this happens? What are the reactions of people in these situations? How do you feel about what you are doing in these situations?
5. What kind of resources do you have at your disposal to carry on the work? What do you need?
6. What changes have you seen in language use in terms of your own personal use of it, in terms of community use, use in your family, other?
7. In all of your experiences in the language work you are doing, what are your greatest rewards? What are your greatest challenges? What motivates you to continue the work despite the challenges?
8. Do you believe the Halq’eméylem language can become a functional, living language once again? If yes, why? What do you think it will take? If no, why not, and why are you doing the work today?
9. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language is central to cultural identity?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true in your life today?
10. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective social adjustment?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true for you in your life today?

11. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language expresses the worldview of its speakers?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true for you in your life today?
12. What advice would you give to people in other language communities whose language is in danger of extinction?
13. As a result of this interview process, have you gained any new insights on what Halq’eméylem means to you in your life today?
14. Is there anything I haven’t asked that you feel is important to this discussion?
15. Is there anything you would like to add to what you have already said?

### **Guiding Questions for Elders**

1. Please describe your earliest memories of hearing and speaking Halq’eméylem.
2. When and in what kinds of situations did you find yourself hearing or speaking Halq’eméylem throughout your lifetime?
3. What hindered or helped you to remember Halq’eméylem? What is your level of fluency in Halq’eméylem today?
4. What changes in Halq’eméylem have you observed throughout your lifetime? I.e., number of speakers, speech events, attitude toward the language among Stó:lō, other.
5. When did you begin to share your knowledge of Halq’eméylem so others could learn it? What motivated you at those times? What were the successes, challenges?
6. How did you become involved in the Stó:lō Shxweli Halq’eméylem Language Program? Please describe your involvement in as much detail as you can.
7. Since you began work with Stó:lō Shxweli, what changes have you seen in Halq’eméylem language use in terms of your own personal use of it, in terms of community use, use in your family, other?
8. In all of your experiences in the language work you are doing, what are your greatest rewards? What are your greatest challenges? What motivates you to continue the work despite the challenges?
9. Do you believe the Halq’eméylem language can become a functional, living language once again? If yes, why? What do you think it will take? If no, why not, and why are you doing the work today?
10. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language is central to cultural identity?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true in your life today?
11. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language enhances self-esteem and pride which promotes effective social adjustment?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true for you in your life today?
12. What is your understanding of the statement, “Language expresses the worldview of its speakers?” Is this statement true for you? How is it true for you in your life today?
13. What advice would you give to people in other language communities whose language is in danger of extinction?
14. As a result of this interview process, have you gained any new insights on what Halq’eméylem means to you in your life today?
15. Is there anything I haven’t asked that you feel is important to this discussion?
16. Is there anything you would like to add to what you have already said?

Simon Fraser University  
Special Arrangements Program  
Office of the Dean of Graduate Studies

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS**  
in

**“Without Our Language, We Will Cease to Exist as a Unique People:”  
Stó:l̓ Halq’eméylem Language Renewal**

The University and the researcher conducting this project subscribe to the ethical conduct of research and to the protection at all times of the interests, comfort, and safety of subjects. This form and the information it contains are given to you for your own protection and full understanding of the procedures. Your signature on this form will indicate that you have received a document which describes the procedures, and potential benefits of this research project, that you have received an adequate opportunity to consider the information in the document, and that you voluntarily agree to participate in the project.

Any information that is obtained during this study will be kept confidential to the full extent permitted by law. Knowledge of your identity is not required. However, you may choose to reveal your identity if you wish. If you wish your name to be withheld from the thesis and from any further publication of the thesis, please check option 1. If you wish to have your name included in the completed thesis, please check option 2. In addition, Stó:l̓ Nation officially endorses this project as research that is meaningful to the Stó:l̓ people. You will be asked for your permission to have the data collected from your interview registered with the Stó:l̓ Nation archives, with your instructions for accessibility of this material.

You can stop the interview at any time and can refuse to answer any questions you may not wish to answer. You may also decline to discuss matters or issues that you, for one reason or another, might not want to discuss.

You will not be required to write your name on any other identifying information on the research materials unless you wish to do so. Materials will be held in a secure location. It is possible that, as a result of legal action, the researcher may be required to divulge information obtained in the course of this research to a court or other legal body.

Having been asked by Ethel B. Gardner of the Special Arrangements Doctoral Program at Simon Fraser University to participate in a research project, my signature on this document indicates that

I have read the procedures specified in the document.

I understand the procedures to be used in this project and that the results of this project may bring some benefits to the Stó:lō community.

I understand that I may withdraw my participation in this project at any time.

I also understand that I can contact Ethel B. Gardner, principal researcher, with questions or queries about the project. I can reach her at Home: (604)824-5664, Work, (604) 824-5216, email: ethel.gardner@stolonation.bc.ca, or gardnet@home.com.

I may register any complaint I might have about the project with Jonathan C. Driver, Dean of Graduate Studies, Simon Fraser University, 8888 University Drive, Burnaby, British Columbia, V5A 1S6.

I understand that I will have an opportunity to give feedback to Ethel B. Gardner on the portion of the research to which my interview contributes, and on other aspects of the research project as well, and that I will receive a copy of the finished research product.

I agree to participate in an interview as described in the document referred to above, during the Fall 2000 at a place agreeable to both myself and the principal researcher, Ethel B. Gardner.

Name(print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Please Check one:

1. Confidentiality required.....

2. Confidentiality not required.....

I agree to release interview data to Stó:lō Nation Archives

Yes  or No

If yes, with the following conditions for accessibility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee \_\_\_\_\_ Witness \_\_\_\_\_

signature

signature

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**ETHEL GARDNER**  
603-125 West Keith Road  
North Vancouver, B.C. V7M 1L2  
Tel: (604) 924-5336  
Email: [gardnet@home.com](mailto:gardnet@home.com)

November 13, 2001

Láw Tel Si:yá:ye,

Greetings everyone! At long last, I am sending you an audio and print copy of the time we shared together talking about your experiences in Halq'eméylem language renewal. I am also sending you the description of the research project and interview guide. Your consent form is also included.

You will see how I presented what you shared with me, alongside of my commentary on what you said. Your participation has contributed significantly to understanding a small part of how a person's work in Halq'eméylem language renewal affects ones life and the lives of others in tremendously positive, and sometimes challenging, ways.

In particular, what people shared regarding Halq'eméylem renewal efforts validates what the elders have said about how our language identifies who we are, how it reflects our worldview and that bringing it into the forefront in our lives increases our self esteem by promoting a strong sense of Stó:lō identity. This effort is truly a movement toward overcoming past injustices, toward become "worthy people," "*smelá:lh.*"

I would love to hear any feedback you may have on how I presented what you said. You can phone me at home in the evenings or on weekends to discuss your thoughts, or you can email me at the address above. I may contact you to clarify the Halq'eméylem in your section. If there is any part of your excerpt that you do not feel comfortable with, please contact me and we can discuss it.

I have yet to derive findings for the overall research. You will be sure to get a copy of the final product. Also, at the time that I have to defend my dissertation, you will be invited to attend. I look forward to seeing everyone soon! Bye for now.

*Lámowelh*

*Stelómethet*  
Ethel Gardner