WAŁKEN NE SKÁL: SXÉDFELISYE’S SENĆOŦEN Auto-ethnography

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Abstract

The WSÁNEĆ School Board located on the Saanich Peninsula of southern Vancouver Island currently houses the SENĆOŦEN department, which includes the SȾÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship program. SȾÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN is the focus of this paper and is shared through an auto-ethnographical lens as a SENĆOŦEN apprentice and language learner. Each WSÁNEĆ logo is one of the language revitalization initiatives currently run by the SENĆOŦEN department. This is an auto-ethnographic account of my SENĆOŦEN journey and how my involvement with SȾÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship enabled me to teach in an immersion setting, thereby transforming my life.
Acknowledgment

I would like to acknowledge the Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí, Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí, Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí, Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí, and Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí for their beautiful artwork that represents the Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí initiatives.

I would also like to acknowledge STóltící, čOSIINIYÉ, and PENÁWEN for the Sḵááł Senḵtíjëwí logo on the title page. The logo translation- “The fire is the language and life within our people. The bear emerging from the fire is a protector of our emerging children and represents our growing seasons. The wolves on the outside are the protectors of our villages. The sun and the moon behind the bear represent the
seasons of our homeland, and the gift of each day – the gift of language for our people” (STOLČEŁ, 2012).

The artwork and pictures may not be used without the permission of author and STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN.

**Dedication**

I dedicate this to NE ḌENENE (my children). Let them forever know the sacrifices we took for them, and all the STELITKEŁ (children) in WSÁNEĆ. I dedicate this to the Elders that are resting, fishing, and speaking their first language in peace and harmony at the STOTELU LÁ,E TŦE SČÁĆEL. Also to all the beautiful people that have helped me along the way, I raise my hands to you all, ENÁN U JI JEŁ NE SIÁM SELWÁN, I NE SIÁM SČÁLEĆE.
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Thank you high respected one, sacred spirit. Thank you for everything you have made on the Earth. Thank you for grandmother and grandfather four winds. Take pity on us the ones you left on this Earth. Take pity on us and help us take a good path on Earth. We are happy for everything you made on Earth and our homeland. All of our sacred mountains: Mt. Newton, Bear Hill, Mt. Tolmie, Mt. Douglas, the whole of Saanich and the little Saanich Mountain. All of you listen, all of your respected spirits. Listen to me respected hono(u)rable ones. Bring my prayer to the Great Spirit today. Look after my relatives. Look after my brothers, sisters, my children, my partner, all my nieces and nephews. My in-laws and my brother and sister in-laws and thank you respected one for the entire showing of things. All of the animals walking in the hills in the forest, salt water, ocean, and the lakes and all islands. Listen all of my respected ones all the ones flying, Bald eagle, Golden Eagle. Let there be peace amongst us today. Work together with one another. And move us forward on a good path today. Let your sacred teachings and environment laws live. All my relations (STOLČEŁ, 2004).
Opening with a SDIWIEŁ (prayer) is an important value that our Elders have instilled in all apprentices in the STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN program. “Prayer is a way to protect and guide our loved ones. A way to be thankful for all the things XÁLS the creator has given us on this Earth in this life” (PITEŁÁNEWOT, p.10, 2010). The prayer that I have included in this paper is a very special prayer because it was the first prayer that I learned. My language mentor STOLĆEŁ spoke about a time in his life where all he wanted to do was to communicate in his own language with our great Creator and that was the factor that motivated him to learn SENĆOŦEN. When he told this story it really affected me because I was looking for guidance in my life, and learning this prayer opened up a whole new perspective that led me to the path I am on today.

Another important WSÁNEĆ protocol is explaining our family lineage when meeting or speaking to people. It especially helps the Elders know which families you belong to. It also identifies what nation you come from and connects you to territory and ancestral names as well as genealogy or place of origin.
EN Ć,SE LÁ,E,ĶEN (Introduction)

EN Ć,SE LÁ,E,ĶEN ET S澧E nghìnISYÈ (Hummingbird woman’s Introduction)

S澧E именно ИсИÈ TE NE SNÁ Ć,SE LÁ,E SEN ET Të WŞÁNEĆ (WJOŁEŁP I BOKEČEN). Darren James Të NE MÁN ĆS,E LÁ,E ET Të BOKEČEN. ˛Á,˚U I ˚ᾶKENEMEŃTEN TE NE SELSILE Ć,SE LÁ,E ET Të BOKEČEN. Karen Sampson Të NE TÁN Ć,SE LÁ,E ET Të WJOŁEŁP. Paulette Sampson I XETÇOMTEN TE NE SELSILE Ć,SE LÁ,E ET Të WJOŁEŁP. NE STOŁES PENÁWEŃ Elliott. TOLISIYE (9yrs), LIQIĆIÁ (6yrs) I TÊ,ILIYE (4yrs) TÊ NE ÑENÑENE Ć,SE LÁ,E ET Të WŞÁNEĆ.

Ć,SE LÁ,E TÊ XÄXE TÊE SKÄL ŁTE. SENÇOŦEN TÊE ĆELÁNEN ŁTE. SQÁ Ćs ĆÁ,ET TÊE SKÄL ŁTE. ĆÁ I SEN TÊE NE SENÇOŦEN SKÄL MEQ ŚCÁCEL.

I, HUĆISTEŇ TÊE WŞÁNEĆ ŚTELITĶEŁ LÁ,E TÊE LE,NONET SCUL,ÅTW ÁŁE E WJOŁEŁP. IY SKÄŁEĆEN I QOMQEM,SET I TU,E I,TOTALŇEW TÊE SENÇOŦEN SKÄŁ ŁTE I, IY,TOW SEN ĆNES ÇOUES TÊE SENÇOŦEN MEQ ŚCÁCEL. ĆOĆES ĆNES TOLNEW MEQ ŚCÁCEL. NEŢE ŚCÁCEL I JELÁNEW SE TÊE SENÇOŦEN SKÄLS E TÊE WŞÁNEĆ WILŇEW I ŚTELITĶEŁ ŁTE.

SENÇOŦEN TIA I, ĆSE LÁ,E ET Të WŞÁNEĆ SEN.
My name is Renee Sampson and I am from the Saanich Nation. My father is Darren James from BOḰEĆEN (Pauquachin) and his parents are Rosalie James and Bryine James from BOḰEĆEN. My mother’s name is Karen Sampson and her parents are Paulette Sampson and Kenneth Sampson from WȽOȽLEȽP (Tsartlip). My partner’s name is PENÁWEN and our daughter’s names are TOLISIYE (9yrs), LIQITIA (6yrs), and TÉ,ILIYE (4yrs). Our language is from the Sacred One. SENĆOŦEN is our birthright. We cannot let our language go. I have been working hard learning SENĆOŦEN and teaching SENĆOŦEN to our Saanich children in WȽOȽLEȽP (Tsartlip). I am getting stronger and have the highest regard for learning our SENĆOŦEN language. I am still learning SENĆOŦEN and use what I know in my every day life. One day we will hear our Saanich people and children using SENĆOŦEN in all parts of life again. This is our language and I am WSÁNEĆ.

Background

Language is our unique relationship to the Creator, our attitudes, beliefs, values, and fundamental notions of what is truth. Our Languages are the cornerstones of who we are as a people. Without our Languages, our cultures cannot survive (Assembly of First Nations, 2007 p. 5).
The impact of colonization affected WSÁNEĆ people drastically. WSÁNEĆ people felt the language shift dramatically after contact and with the implementation of the reserve system, banning of the SXOLE (reef-net), the Indian Act, and residential school system (Elliott & Poth, 1990). Many Elders in WSÁNEĆ worked endlessly documenting SENĆOŦEN. Our Elders spent thousands of hours recording and writing down words and sentences. They felt the urgency, they saw the break down of our natural language transmission, and they began to mentor those who are now our WSÁNEĆ mentor teachers (STOLȻEŁ, ĆOSINIYE, KÁNTENOT). Many SELWÁN (respected Elder advisors) would share their knowledge right up until they could not physically continue. This dedication and commitment in WSÁNEĆ will never be forgotten, that spark has not faded, and the flames are currently raging in WSÁNEĆ with today’s language revitalization efforts.

**Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to document the SENĆOŦEN community-based language initiatives in WSÁNEĆ with a focus on the STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship program through an auto-ethnographic perspective. My auto-ethnography will focus on my personal experience as a STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprentice documenting my SENĆOŦEN language growth and my language
experiences before I was an apprentice. Undertaking this project is an opportunity to acknowledge the SQENSTENeko (fire-keepers-language champions and leaders), SELWÁN (our Elders), and STÁSEN apprentice team for their tremendous language revitalization efforts. I have been documenting my language growth since 2004 through personal language journals. I have held them close to my heart and now I am ready to share some of my most treasured memories, stories, and reflections from my language journey.

Overview

This auto-ethnography is written in seven sections. I have used WSÁNEĆ art logos as headings, created by STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN department, to signify each SENĆOŦEN based initiative and how each initiative is significant to my language growth. The seven logos themselves depict the SENĆOŦEN revitalization language initiatives through WSÁNEĆ (Straight Salish) art forms.

It was difficult for me to decide which initiative was going to be represented first so I decided to structure my auto-ethnography through a time-line of significant stories and events in my life pertaining to my language journey. Our team has created a poster that represents our STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN department. I would like to take the time to acknowledge the work that was done in the creation of this poster. The
creation of this poster was done in a group in a holistic fashion, and what came out of these gatherings was a I,Í,Y,MET ḰŁO,EL (beautiful Camas flower). In figure 1. the STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN poster is in a minimized state. SENĆOŦEN is the bulb, STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship is in the middle, and all of the other initiatives/logos are the petals. This poster was an inspiration for my auto-ethnography and I am honoured that my team allowed me to add pieces of our poster in my work.

Figure 1. STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN Poster 2013
The roadmap for my auto-ethnography starts with STÁSEN TŦE SENČOŦEN section. It is important for readers to understand what the word “STÁSEN” means and how our apprenticeship came to receive that name. EKOTEL ŁTE (our team) is diverse in educational background, age, and gender. However, we share the same passion, which is the love for our language. This section also looks at NE SOŁ (my path) and how I became involved with SENČOŦEN, and how I came to be where I am today.

SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ (Elder gatherings) is the second section and is a reflection of the times spent with WSÁNEĆ Elders. This section discusses the relationship building with Elders and youth, as well as the friendships created with the Elders (gatherings) through the apprenticeship. The next section ÁLENEČ (learning from my homeland) discusses the outdoor education program with a focus on place-based learning, the involvement of Elders accompanying us out on excursions, and immersion camps out on our TELEŦÁĆES (islands). The fourth section, WUČISTEL (Master-Apprenticeship) focuses on the relationships that I have with my mentors and different activities and experiences that I have had working with them. Next, ĖLÁNENKEN (Ancestral voices, recordings, and storytelling) highlights the importance of listening to our late Elders speaking their first language SENČOŦEN in
a natural state. Listening and studying intonation, sentence structure, grammar, and _WSÁNEĆ_ storytelling is what all the _STÁSEN_ apprentices are required to do as part of our job. We all aspire to speak like these recordings and every year we begin to understand more of what is being discussed in the old recordings. _XETSITES_ (Curriculum development) section touches on the _SENČOFEN_ curriculum projects that the apprenticeship creates. The last and final section, _LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW_ (_SENČOFEN_ Survival School/Immersion programs), discusses the process of starting an immersion program and shares our _WSÁNEĆ_ philosophy description, methods, and implementations of the school. This section delves deep into my personal thoughts about being a learner of the language and highlights my experience being a learner-teacher in immersion. This section ends with my thoughts on my new endeavors and hopes and dreams for my family and community.

The guiding questions that I kept in my mind when writing were:

1) How has _STÁSEN TTE SENČOFEN_ contributed to my language learning process?

2) How do I keep my fire going?

   My aspiration is to share _STÁSEN TTE SENČOFEN_’s initiatives, challenges, and success to create language awareness and to promote what we are doing in
WSÁNEĆ in regards to language revitalization. I am hoping that my story will serve as an example of successful language learning that will inspire other learners.

**ČEKI,USE (building of the fire)**

SENČOŦEN language is the SONUSE (fire). To build my SONUSE (fire) I learned that I needed the following ŠWḰÁLEČENS (feelings that connects heart, body and mind): patience, determination, motivation, positivity, hope, humility, and perseverance. Before you start a language SONUSE (fire) you gather what you need; in language revitalization, it is EŁTÁŁNEW (people), SELWÁN (Elders), SQENSTENEK (knowledge keepers), WUCISTENEK (language teachers), SĆÁLEĆE (language allies, linguists), and networking with SCUL,ÂUTW (institution/organizations).

The following figure represents the key components that I needed to build my fire and continues to support and maintain my fire within.

![Figure 2. Key components to ČEKI,USE NE SENČOŦEN](image)
My WSÁNEĆ role models are our language champions. They are the SQENSTENEK (fire-keepers), who ĖḰ,ĲUSE (start the fire). The late Dave Elliott, Ernie Olsen, and many other Elders, ignited the fire in the 1970s by knocking on doors, pulling people together, and gathering the SĆEKNAŁEN (kindling). Many of the young people that they encouraged became instrumental in later revitalization efforts. After some time gathering the different kind of SĆOL (wood), Dave felt that using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was not an accessible alphabet for the community. The IPA typewriter was not affordable in those days, costing more than $1000, and the IPA writing system had to be taught by a linguist. Dave Elliott, a determined and disciplined man who was deeply rooted in his WSÁNEĆ culture, felt it was important that we had an accessible, easy orthography. I have heard Elders speak about how proud they were of our SENĆOŦEN alphabet. They would say that we do not have to rely on an outsider to create our alphabet; we have SĆUÁT (intelligent) WSÁNEĆ Elders. Many of the Elders would mention to us that they felt that having our own orthography was an act of self-determination and sovereignty. Dave created the SENĆOŦEN alphabet using a $30 typewriter, which was accessible and affordable (Hagar, 2005). The SENĆOŦEN orthography created a bright blaze Ý,OLUSE.
Thousands of words were documented and saved for the next generations to come.

Thousands of hours were spent writing, recording, typing, and meeting.

Our current WSÁNEĆ Elders lived during a time where they only heard SENĆOŦEN in their homes. However, they felt the pressures of assimilation. They had seen the change in the younger people; WSÁNEĆ youth were no longer being raised with SENĆOŦEN. Residential school survivors were no longer teaching SENĆOŦEN to their children due to the trauma they endured. The times were changing and they felt the urgency of documenting and preserving SENĆOŦEN.

It was a difficult time in WSÁNEĆ when our SQENSTENK passed on. The fire dimmed and there seemed to be nothing left but KÁ,YEĆEP (ashes). However, in the late 1980’s the WSÁNEĆ Nation fought hard to gain control over Native education. The WSÁNEĆ School Board was created and founded with the help of Marie Cooper, Phillip Paul, and many important WSÁNEĆ community members. Once again, this movement stirred something in WSÁNEĆ. Control over our education was a milestone, and in the early 1990’s the building of ĖLÁU,WEL,NEW Tribal school united the four WSÁNEĆ villages. The SONUSE in WSÁNEĆ began to give off ĖLËNTÁLŚ (sparks) again. Elders, carvers, language warriors, political leaders, and the community came together to build the school. It was the dream of the WSÁNEĆ
Elders to have a school where they could walk the halls and hear the children speaking the language. That was the dream: a place where they could be educated in our WSÁNEĆ way and learn how to walk in two worlds.

WSÁNEĆ lost Phillip Paul a few years later, as well as many Elders since then. Once again the fire began to dim. The original vision to have a school where our language and culture was at the forefront was put on the backburner.

*EWES TEQ TTE SONUSE* (Don’t let the fire out)

In my graduate program at the University of Victoria I found it interesting to hear fellow classmates discuss “the knock on the door.” This is an expression that I have heard Elders in WSÁNEĆ use many times. It was a physical knock, but more than that it was a calling to learn, revitalize, and preserve our ancient language. They were recruiting individuals and continued to encourage them to go to gatherings, use the language in public, or become teachers of the language. The Elders that received the knock on their door refused to let the fire go out and refused to let SENĆOŦEN go.

Late Earl Claxton Sr. and his apprentices began to stoke the fire and KEPEṈ TTE SĆOŁ (gather wood), built resources, and produced a new generation of teachers. The fire managed to survive. A small fire burned, it was not yet blazing but sat glowing for years. This small fire remained small by the SENĆOŦEN exposure
programs being taught at the ŁÁU,WEL,NEW tribal school. The exposure program teaches language through an English medium. SENĆOŦEN has been taught for 20-25 minutes a day for over 20 years. The exposure program illuminated and shone a light. WSÁNEĆ children felt the heat and warmth from a distance, but did not have the opportunity to feel the true warmth of the fire. They were only allowed to sit and be close to the fire for short amounts of time. The SENĆOŦEN WUĆISTENEK (teachers) used to be the apprentices, and now they were becoming the SQENEDESTENEK. Our mentors were the children of our past language warriors. They now held the torch and touched many WSÁNEĆ children in their programs.

The spark is within everyone; everyone is capable of learning the language. It is up to oneself to ignite it and let it blaze. Our Elders speak about language being within everyone. It just needs to be woken up. (ĆOSINIYE Elliott, personal communication, April 2009)

Many students did not know what that feeling was yet. But the inner fire was being nurtured without their total knowing. I, as well as others, were touched by their enthusiasm, creativity, passion, hope, and resilience which they shared with all of their students in their classrooms.
STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN Apprenticeship program
**STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN logo translation**

Within the STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN logo there are “three notable figures to consider in relation to the image’s composition: the frog, woodpecker, and human being. The human figure is reflective, a figure that we identify ourselves with. The frog is symbolic of new life and transformation, as the frog, or WEXES, is “the bringer of the sacred season.” TETEṈ, the pileated woodpecker is symbolic of work, and like all birds, are beings that are favored by the creator, having been given the gift of flight.

All of the figures are represented as being in both transition and kinship or connection. They are woven together and interconnected just as the hands and feet of the frog and the human, which are one and the same. The woodpecker rests on the head of the human figure as though it was a ŚWKITES – woolen headband, which is associated today with SIÁM, a respected person” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

To understand this section you need to understand where the name STÁSEN comes from. My involvement in STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship and my language journey will be covered in this section.
Our WSÁNEĆ ĖLÁNEN LE (ancestors) have passed on the story of STÁSEN to our SELWÁN and they have passed it on to us (SENĆOŦEN Apprentices).

**STÁSEN**

STÁSEN was a messenger. It is more than a cedar blank; its presence at the door of our S,HIWEḴ (leaders) long house was our security system. When our ancestors would lay to rest at night, STÁSEN was on the look out for each long house, ready to notify our people who were inside resting. STÁSEN would be placed like a ramp at the foot of the doorway; it had “two hollowed out logs underneath it which would amplify the sound” (STÁSEN, poster 2012). If stepped on, it would illuminate a unique noise or “WHOMP” which would alert our WSÁNEĆ people. At times of XI,LEX (war), STÁSEN would be there to alert the people if an enemy was on our doorstep. However, at times of peace the STELITḴEḴ (children) would bounce, play, and laugh on it. Our Elders said you could hear the children’s laughter echoing as they bounced and played and the big “WHOMP” sound would be heard by our relatives that lived in the next village, or even as far as across the bay. All who heard STÁSEN accompanied with the sound of children playing would know that this was a time of peace (STOLḴEḴ, personal communication 2010).
The name STÁSEN was bestowed on the SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship (also what we call our language department) by STOLĆEŁ (John Elliott) our SELWÁN (mentor/advisor). Our language department carries this name with pride and we all remember the importance STÁSEN had for our ancestors during both hard times and times of joy. Our apprenticeship is here to alert our people that we must not let go of our language, and we will continue to fight for our SENĆOŦEN freedom. STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN will be that bridge for SENĆOŦEN. It is the cedar plank that our children can come walk on, play, laugh, and speak our birthright language. We will be that “springboard into the future. If the children can be heard speaking our language, then we know we are truly safe” (STÁSEN poster, 2012).

When people think of a language apprenticeship they often think of a master-apprenticeship. That is one of the initiatives that we have embarked on, but that is only one initiative out of the many that are housed in our department. To be an apprentice you have to be working towards a degree such as teaching, technology, art, child and youth care, etc. You have to be open to public speaking, working with technology, and creating curriculum. You have to be open to working well beyond what your list of duties. It is not just a job. We are running against time-documenting, preserving, learning, and working on language transmission, so that our beautiful language will be
here for generations to come. We network with other Indigenous communities, and go to conferences to see what is the latest language acquisitions strategies or methods. Do not get me wrong, I have the most fulfilling, meaningful, and fun job due to the great team I work with. However, there is so much work to do it can leave my head spinning at times. What we do is identify, nurture, and encourage everyone’s gifts, like our people used to. Why should we try and know it all? There were people in our communities that had many gifts, but we had experts, or what some might call masters, in carving, fishing, hunting, weaving, midwifery, medicine, warriors, etc. If you needed help you would go to them and in return you would help them -- reciprocal giving. That is what I see in our apprentices. We have our SENĆOŦEN apprentices that are the technological geniuses that use programs to make professional books, create their own posters, and are knowledgeable about the Internet. Then there are apprentices that help the Elders and have the gifts of protocol and public speaking abilities, and our artists who are revitalizing our WSÁNEĆ art as well as language. Some apprentices are the big picture thinkers and have the gifts of teaching, working with children, and building curriculum. Think-tank sessions are key to keeping a team strong and making sure we do not trap ourselves in the box, because our team members are out-of-the-box thinkers. That is what you need to do when you are
strategizing regarding ways to keep a language alive, with little to no money, or working on soft funding (S̓EDE̓TELISIYE, personal journal, 2012).

**Language Authority**

In 2010 our S̓TÁSEN TŦE SENĆOTŦEN received a grant from First Peoples Language and Culture Council to help set up our Language Authority. This was how we began to plan for the revitalization and preservation of SENĆOTŦEN. Our Language Authority consists of 4 community representatives from WSÁNEĆ, S̓TÁSEN apprentices, S̓TÁSEN facilitator, SENĆOTŦEN teachers, and WSÁNEĆ Elders. The Language Authority and S̓TÁSEN are working hand-in-hand to develop a short and long-term language plan. This involves certifying language teachers, creating a SENĆOTŦEN archive, dictionary, and new terminology (lexicon), and creating outreach programs for community. S̓TÁSEN keeps in mind the 8 steps of community language revitalization: Keeping it Alive that the First Peoples Heritage and Language Culture Council (2010) created.

**EKOŦEŁ PEŦE (Our team)**

We started with two summer apprentices (myself and Joan) in April 2009. Then in September of that year, we hired 7 more apprentices; six stayed on (myself, Joan,
SI,OLTENOT, PENÁĆ, MENÉTIYE and PIṬELÁNEWOT). In 2011, we hired three more apprentices (PENÁWEEN, SDEMOXELTEN, I ṬELAXIYE). We lost two apprentices due to family commitments and other job opportunities. Most recently, we hired three new apprentices (KÁNTENOT, Suzy, and Jacqueline).

The WSÁNEĆ School Board supports our language revitalization efforts and QELEQŒSEĆEN (Tye Swallow), our STÁSEN team facilitator, helps us find funding. He write grant applications and coordinates our team meetings. The majority of us are in classrooms, building curriculum, or working with Elders, so his role is very important because none of us have the time to write the reports and run around looking for grants. He also is the go-to-guy that counsels us when we need the extra support: as a friend or an ally that lobbies for our immersion initiatives, or a professional confidante. We are truly blessed to have such an open-minded person helping build our fire. His love for the land and his humble nature is a perfect fit for our team.

NE SOŁ (My path)

In 1987 I was in Little Raven pre-school; I was 4 years old. I had the kindest soft-spoken SENĆOŦEN teacher; she had braids and a warm smile. She was short and smiled with her eyes. We would walk to her room, which was a small room, and she would greet us in SENĆOŦEN and smile and sing. Her voice was strong but soft at the
same time. The way she interwove our language with song captured me, and it was her songs that stuck to my heart. She created an ember in NE ȽÁLE (my heart). I never realized how much she affected my love for language learning until now. She made me fall in love with learning languages. I did not realize that her teacher presence got embedded in me, in my style of teaching (SXEDŦELISIYE, personal journal, 2013).

My parents decided to put me in public school where there was no SENCȽTEN programming of any kind. They had their own reasons for not sending me to ŁÁU,WEL,ṈEW. I was one of the WSȽÁNEĆ children who went through public elementary, middle school, and high school with no WSȽÁNEĆ language or culture. I carried the love for learning languages with me from Little Raven to the public school. I loved learning French. Again, it was the songs that drew me and the puppets, the silly wolf, and the caboose filled with language activities. I enjoyed the enthusiasm of the French teacher, maybe a little silly but she was entertaining and she sang catchy tunes.

I never knew then that I was missing out on my own language. It was never spoken about or considered important in my household. My parents were too busy with their own lives, fighting with the effects of being children of residential school
survivors. I knew something was missing at a young age, I just did not know what that was. It was a silent loneliness, knowing that I was a little different from my classmates.

I took French up until grade 8; I received excellent grades and decided to try Spanish in high school. I completed one semester because I was upset that I received a C+ in that class. What a silly thing to do, stop learning the language because I got a lower grade. Again no programs were offered to support our own language in our own territory, but you could learn Japanese, Spanish or French (SXEDTELISIYE, personal journal, 2013).

I graduated from Stelly’s Secondary in 2001 and my aunt SE,SA,ETE signed me up at Camosun College. I told her that I was going to take a few years off and work; she counseled me, “one year will turn to two years, and then three years, take this program and find out what you like and then go from there” (Garcia, personal communication, 2001). This was the year when I finally realized what that void, the searching, and what the hurt was; it was language loss.

I was 18 years old in the First Nations Community Studies program (FNCSP), a young mind, SKIKEL, and a bit lost. This program really made me realize just how little I knew about my culture, my language, and myself. In the FNCSP, we were given an opportunity to enter a Co-op internship at the end of the diploma. I was undecided
regarding what career path I wanted to pursue. I had just met ĖOSINIYE Elliott, a
SENĆOTEN primary teacher at our night classes that I had started to attend, so I
thought maybe that would be a good placement. I spent 2 weeks with her, moving
class to class where she taught SENĆOTEN. This is where I realized I wanted to be a
teacher, a teacher that integrated SENĆOTEN into my lessons and everyday language
in my classroom. Little did I know that I would be teaching from a SENĆOTEN
medium, rather than English medium.

In 2003, PENÁṈEN (NE STOLES - my partner) and I began to go to his
family language classes at the community Heritage Building on Tuesday nights. His
father encouraged us to come and learn. I was a bit hesitant, but also really curious. I
went to the session with my paper pad and pen. They would talk amongst themselves
in SENĆOTEN, go over word lists, tell stories and history, and write sentences down
and speak the sentences and translate them into English. I went in with absolutely no
SENĆOTEN background and a few LEḴEM,IN,EN words. I had absolutely no idea
what was being said that night. I looked up at the green chalkboard and had no clue
what the sentences meant or how to move my mouth to pronounce what I was seeing.
It felt so foreign to me on that first day, and it frustrated me. I did not show my
frustration; I didn’t want to show how little I knew, so I was silent. I did not know the
SENĆOTÉN alphabet, but I went in with my eyes open, my mind open, and wrote and listened. The SENĆOTÉN teachers and PENÁWEEN’s family and relatives did not make me feel inferior; they did not ridicule me or make me feel guilty for not knowing. They did what they were taught from their SELWÁN (mentors). They encouraged us younger ones to listen, repeat, learn, and told us that speaking would then come. They told us, “it was not very long ago that we were sitting in the same seat that you are sitting in now, learning from our SELWÁN” (Elders gathering, personal communication, 2003).

I remember how I felt the first night: confusion, excitement, sadness, happiness, anger, and then hope. I was on an emotional roller coaster ride. I remember feeling emotional about how hard it was trying to learn my heritage language, and angered by having to work so hard to learn a language that should be my first language. I felt saddened about the history of why it is not my first language. But in the end, I was excited and happy that I was making an effort to learn and I was hopeful.

STOLĆEL’s words rang through my head; “If I can learn, anyone can. I was 26 years old when I started; I couldn’t even count to 10. I wanted to be able to pray and connect with my creator in my own language and that was the motivation that pushed me to
Being pregnant with my first daughter changed everything for me. I wanted to learn 
SENĆOTEN for my unborn baby. My partner and I began to involve ourselves in night classes, and when she was born I would take her to the night sessions and began to learn the alphabet. We also participated in the Linguistic 159 classes offered through University of Victoria. It was a total win-win situation because I was doing my core course load but needed a fourth class and was able to get credit for it. These classes consisted of a lot of paper and pen learning and oral story telling.

We had our first child and her SILE STOLĆEŁ (grandpa) and his late cousin named her. She was named TOLISIYE, from TOL meaning far out at sea. Her SILE calls her princess of the sea. We promised her that we would learn SENĆOTEN for her.
That summer I ran into QELEQESEĆEN (Tye Swallow), a Biology teacher at the Saanich Adult Education Center (SAEC). He knew that I was pursuing my Bachelors of Education degree. He asked if I wanted to be a part of a mini project, to be a language apprentice creating curriculum, working with technology and Elders. It felt as if the Universe was pulling me towards WSÁNEĆ. The Universe was working hard at aligning me with SENĆOŦEN.

Our three SENĆOŦEN teachers carried the torch for 20 plus years with only each other. They were overworked; they built their own curriculum from drawing to labeling, all by hand. Then at night they would teach classes for our community. They also were asked by community and language organizations to assist them with language revitalization initiatives, and they taught SENĆOŦEN full-time in the elementary, high school, and adult center.

Thinking about the future, and their retirement, they knew that they needed a training program. They began to plant the seeds of creating a SENĆOŦEN apprenticeship program with the WSÁNEĆ School Board.

In 2008, I had my second daughter LIQIŦIÁ (LIQI-water lily); her SÍEŁ (older sister) calls her princess of the lakes and ponds. Also in 2009, the WSÁNEĆ School
board (WSB) supported the idea of training young apprentices to shadow and learn from the SENĆOŦEN teachers that worked at the ŁÁU,WEL,ÑEW Tribal School elementary and newly founded high-school. WSB put a call out to the four communities (WJOȽEȽP, BOKEĆEN, SŦÁUTW, WSÍKEM) that 3 positions were going to be posted for SENĆOŦEN apprentices. There were 7 applicants that applied, and seven were hired. Out of the seven, six stayed on. This was a new endeavor for WSÁNEĆ. All apprentices were working towards degrees in visual arts and education, and one apprentice was working towards their Masters in Counseling. We were hired to work 10 hours a week, which was perfect for all of us because we were all enrolled full-time in post-secondary classes. We were all at different levels of learning, different families represented from our four villages. I was still trying to figure out how I was going to learn SENĆOŦEN, who was going to mentor me, and what was the best method for me to learn. We started our apprenticeship by meeting with our SELWięN once a week.

Figure 6. Convocation Renee (SḴEDŦELISIYE) Sampson with her daughters TOLISIYE, 6, LIQIŦIÁ, 2, and TŦE,ILIYE, 1, outside the First Peoples House at University of Victoria. Photo: Sam Van Schie
**Teacher dedicated to the survival of her native tongue**

Article by Sam Van Schie

It sounds like a lot, but for a woman who gave birth to two of her three children while completing a full university course load—at one point writing a final paper in labor—it was nothing out of the ordinary. “There are three things that are of importance to me: family, education, and SENĆOTEN,” the 27-year-old says. “I have an incredible support network of family that made it possible to reach my academic goals.” Her Elders call her SXEDFELISIYE, meaning hummingbird woman, because she is always working hard, zooming this way and that, and she doesn’t slow down just like a SXEDJELI (hummingbird).

Sampson found her hunger for learning in her twenties when she discovered the language of her people was critically endangered. With only a handful of Elders still fluent in their language, she realized that she wanted to be a part of preserving and revitalizing SENĆOTEN.

“Language was taken away from our grandparents through the residential school system,” Sampson says. “They were forbidden to speak it, severely punished for speaking the only language that they knew, so it didn’t get passed down to their children.” Reclaiming her native tongue, she felt more connected to her culture. It filled a void in her that she didn’t know was there. Nothing will stand in her way of making sure the children in her community have an opportunity to learn it. “It’s the missing key,” she says. “When they know their language, they know their history.” The first in her family to attend post-secondary school, Sampson has already built up an impressive resume. She’s graduating from U-Vic’s Elementary Education Program with a specialization in language revitalization (CALR). “Everything I learn, it’s not just for me but for my kids and for my people,” she says (Van Schie, p. 11, 2011).
My life partner PENÁWEN was also hired on as an apprentice in 2010, and now we are both on a journey to learn as much of the language as we can so that our daughters will have the opportunity to hear it in our home. PENÁWEN will be graduating from the SENĆOŦEN Bachelors of Education program in June 2015 and is working in the Grade One Immersion class along side two other teachers this September.

We have both had the opportunity to facilitate the Elders’ gatherings and learned so much from them. Their words stick to my soul, and we will never forget their teachings. The next section will discuss our SELWÁN SḰÁPEL (Elders gatherings).
SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ (Elders Gathering) Initiative

STI SEN ÇNES HUISTW TФÁIYE TФE SELWÁN ŁTE SNOUEŁ TIÁ S, XELTOW SI,IAM. NIŁ ÇE TФE SOSES ET SÁLEW HĘCSILEN TIÁ SELWÁN ĂS ĂEOUES TФE SELSÁLES.

ENÁN U, JIJEŁ OL E TФE SELSÁLES S, HIEKT TФE SELWÁN S, OSES. JEÁŁ OL TФE MEMI, MEN SELSÁLES, U, JIET TФÁIYE TФE SELWÁN LO, E ÇE ĂS HĘCSILEN TФE ŃEN SNEPENEK Ɨ, TФE ĂELÁNEN ŁTE TФE ĖLTÁLṈEW SNOUEŁ ET WSÁNEC SI,IAM.

NIŁ E TФE SPA,ÇENs TФE KŁO, EL ONUEŁ TФE MEMI, MEN SELSÁLES. NIŁ E TФE ŚWKÁLEĆENs E TФE SELWÁN LE ŁTE ĂSU QENT MEQ TФE KŁO, EL TU, XENÁN OL TФE MEQ ŚTELITKĘŁ SNOUEŁ TФE WSÁNEĆ TEŇEW. NIŁ E TФE QENÁŁ ŁTE ĂSU Ɨ, TOTELṈEW MEQ TФE SNIUs ŚČÁs ŁTE (ȘDÁSEN Poster, 2012).
SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ (Elder gathering) logo translation

“Within this design there is a face of an Elder using his hands to pass down our teachings. The hands underneath the Elder’s face represent all of our future SENĆOTEN speakers, giving thanks to our Elder advisors for passing onto us all of the teachings, laws, and beliefs of our WSÁNEĆ people. The small flower in between the small hands is a KŁO,EL (Camas flower). Our people of long ago always gathered and harvested Camas. The feelings of our ancestors were to look after all of the Camas. The KŁO, EL is like our children. This is our way, our responsibility, to learn all of the ways that belong to us” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

This section will honour and tell the story of how our SELWÁN have touched my heart and soul with their compassion and open-mindedness, and humble wisdoms from being WSÁNEĆ.

OMET ČENTOL NE SIÁM SELWÁN (sitting with my respected Elders)

In 2009, I was involved in a TD Indigenous student career project from the University of Victoria, which helps Indigenous students connect with community. Students have a choice of either preparing a workshop, or being apart of a reciprocal giving back through a gathering in community, as well as an opportunity to shadow
different professions. I came to a crossroad. I was in a position where I had to choose from either working at the Center of the Universe observatory, or working at the Saanich Adult Education Center with Elders and being apart of a SÉNĆOFÉN conference. I was really scared for some odd reason to work with the Elders. I knew of them; they were SÍÁM SELWÁN (respected Elders) in our community. I let my ŚWКÁLEĆÈN (inner spiritual feelings) decide for me; it told me that I needed to stick closer to my community, closer to my Elders, and learn SÉNĆOFÉN. This experience changed my life and the way I looked at the world. Hearing the language in a fluent form, a natural, peaceful, conversation between two buddies touched my soul. They would joke, laugh, and be serious all in one breath. Their work ethic was what we call real ČÁĆI WSÁNEĆ ŚXÉNÁÑs (hardworking Saanich ways). They were punctual and respected others they worked with by not being late. They had fast breaks, as they were eager to work. They dedicated their Elder lives to helping preserve their first language. I would go over first voices SÉNĆOFÉN lists with them, such as the little one doing this, doing that, little one in a canoe, little one turning over the rock. They worked so hard. After a long day of work, they said they could not work on another word that involved a little one. We laughed and joked about this. I was so honoured and felt privileged that I was able to work with our late Elders and one young Elder
SELILIYE. SELILIYE worked with them for years, coordinating rides, scheduling meetings, and was their dear friend and relative. She has a gift. Some linguists might say she is a latent speaker. She is amazing; she can understand fluently, but due to “Indian day schools” and racism as a young girl she did not speak. When SELILIYE went to public school in the 1960s, she wasn’t allowed to speak SENĆOTEN. “It was a nightmare for me,” she recalls. “We were taught Latin instead. I had no idea what any of it meant. I would get called a dumb Indian. I dreaded going” (Gordon, 2010).

She can understand fluently, but there is a block and I see that block coming down more and more every year. There are few people who can listen to old recordings of Elders and understand fluently. She told us that her mother would only speak SENĆOTEN to her and all her siblings, and she told us that she would answer in English, but understood everything in SENĆOTEN. She is able to articulate and translate like no one else I know. She helped us younger ones feel comfortable with our Elders by her upbeat attitude and her laughter. I realized that this is what we need. We needed a way to connect with our Elders. The SENĆOTEN SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ was bridging that gap. I remember we once spoke about how we recognized that the times have changed. Younger people do not go and visit other Elders that are not their grandparents anymore. Our Elders told us when they were younger that they would go
to other families and visit their Elders and have tea. They told us that we do not see
that anymore. So our Elders were happy to be able to speak to young ones that wanted
to learn the language. Sometimes they would feel bad; they would feel alone because
they had no one to speak the language to. They really looked forward to the sessions.

We started with two Elders, and the fire grew from there.

Figure 7. First SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ ŁTE (our Elders gathering) PENÁĆ, SELILIYE,
WIJELEK LE I TKOŁEĆTEN LE

STÁSEN SELWÁN SKÁPEŁ (Weekly Elders Gatherings)

After we were titled SENCÔFEN apprentices in 2009, we initiated and
continue to maintain a weekly Elders group. Gathering Elders and Apprentices
together provides an opportunity to discuss questions as they relate to words, phrases,
stories, and ideas. This initiative connects all of our work and continues to nurture, guide and sustain our SĆȺ (STÁSEN poster, 2013).

I cherish the Elder gatherings. The time spent with them, our laughter, stories, and tears. I remember being really shy, and a bit afraid to speak SENĆOTEN in front of them at first. One of our Elders would stop us in our tracks when we were reading SENĆOTEN or saying something and would say, “What was that? Say that again?” Nervous and with all our might we would repeat the SENĆOTEN word again and they would say, “QEN,SET”: be careful how you say that, it almost sounded like you were going to swear. All the other Elders would laugh and we would wipe the sweat off our brow and laugh along with them. The intonation of our Elders is amazing, the waving of the hands and tapping on the table with their finger when they were getting serious. The way they stretch the word out to indicate how “LIIIIIULLL” (far) something was. As a young apprentice, I would catch myself speaking like one of the Elders after spending an afternoon with them. It was if I was a chameleon. I was trying to mimic, mold my own voice to theirs. My partner and I would discuss this. “Why are you speaking like you’re old, like an Elder?”, he would ask me. I said, “What? I am not.” I would not even notice this. This is something I have reflected on many times and continue to reflect on finding my own voice in SENĆOTEN.
We are still learning about Language Revitalization and which practices and methodologies are the best methods for adult learners. We try and stay in the language as much as we can in our gatherings. We thought that this would be very easy for the Elders, but we found out that it was actually quite difficult. In small groups the Elders were able to stay in the language longer, but in large groups it was very difficult, and we were not quite sure what factors caused this (hearing aids, space, too many side conversations, etc.). Sometimes, we felt that they were feeling a bit uncomfortable for us, worried that we did not understand. We would assure them to go ahead and not worry about us. We just wanted to hear them speak fluently, and we wanted to learn.

One of the most inspiring phrases that I carry with me and tell other people was from our late Elder Theresa Smith: “ĆOĆES ČENs TOLNEW” (use what you know). This was instrumental for my language learning. Our Elders encouraged us to “just speak,” and encourage us not to give up – use what you know.

In 2010 the Elders gave me the name SxEDŦELISIYE (hummingbird woman). I would always be busy photocopying, making tea/coffee, or preparing food for them. I would help them in whatever way that I could and never slow down. I had two babies as an apprentice and brought my third child TE,ILIYE (TE,IT- meaning truth) to our Elder sessions. They would love seeing them, and would tell me that the babies were
soaking in the language and that they were going to be the next generation to bring
back the language. I took this to heart and made it my mission to help make this dream
of the Elders come true. Late Elder Ivan Morris told me as he tapped his finger to the
table, “NEŦE SĊÁĆEŁ LELÁNEW SE ĽTE TŦE SȽELIȚKEŁ ČE,OUES E TŦE
SENĆOTEN SKÁŁ ĽTE” (One day we will hear our children using our SENĆOTEN
language again in all aspects of life” (personal communication, 2011).

It was very difficult seeing some of our main language warriors leave us; the
other Elders did not want to stop our gatherings. They told us that their dear relative or
friend would have wanted us to not give up. We lost three of our main language
carriers in three years. I made a promise to one of our Elders that I would not stop
learning and would pass along what I learned, the knowledge and the SENĆOTEN, to
my daughters and our WSÁNEĆ children.

SENĆOTEN TŦE ĆELÁNEW ĽTE. EWES U XIXEKE I ĆOĆES I ČE,OUES E TŦEN
SKÁŁ. EWES U MELLEK TŶÁ,E. HO, ĆENs TOTELNEW ĽTE TŦE SENĆOTEN,
QOMQEM,SET ET ŁŅIŅEŁ KELÁT.

SENĆOTEN is our birthright. Do not be embarrassed or backwards to use your
language. Don’t forget that. If we learn our language SENĆOTEN, we will
strengthen ourselves again. (SENĆOTEN Elders meeting, 2009).
Our Elders play a monumental role in our language learning. The next section 
ÁLE̱NEĆ (learning from homeland) will continue to discuss the importance of 
Elder’s in my adult language learning.
ÁLENEĆ (Learning from our homeland) Initiative

ECOS, NONE SEN ĖE ÁLENEĆ TIÁ SXELTOW. U Ė,SE S,XIÁM U Ė,SE HIF LE TÁCEL ET XÁLS. I, LÁTEŅs TFE TFEĻ SŇÁŅET I TFE TETĀČES ŠXIÁM. I ŤÁs MEQ STĀŅ OL. ÁLENEĆ ĖTE SU NH. (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).
ÁLENENEĆ (Learning from the homeland) logo translation

This is the logo for ÁLENENEĆ, or homeland. “The image references a story of the creation of our homelands in WSÁNEĆ. In the story, we say that the Creator made our homelands, the islands, and high mountains from stones that he casted. The stones, however, were actually people who emanated good qualities that the Creator believed we should have. The creator told the islands as he cast them outward, “take care of your relatives.” In the image, the Creator speaks to one of the islands before he casts it out, while the human form appears in a stone that is suspended in mid-air and an island emerges from the water opposite the creator” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

Our Elders tell us that we have to remain connected to our TENEW (land), TELEŢÁCES (islands), and ŚĆEN,NE (oceans). They taught us that if we are looking for answers, go out on to the land where it is quiet. Go to a spot where you can think, without interruptions. You will always find your way when you are at peace and one with the land. This piece will describe the ÁLENENEĆ programs and interactions with Elders out on our territory.
ÁLENENEĆ ŁTE (Our homeland)

ÁLENENEĆ was a pilot project that began in 2006. The primary objective of this two-month unaccredited course for adults was to bring people and place together and to learn from those experiences.

As a collection of learners, we go to culturally significant places in WSÁNEĆ territory by kayak or canoe and talk about history, teachings, and ecology.

SENĆOTEN place names frame this context. It is the bringing together of Elders, community, and our students that breathes life into our collective experiences. It is the energy of people, their stories, their knowledge, and their questions, that guide us in learning from WSÁNEĆ places (STÁSEN Poster, 2013).

Since 2006 we have offered several iterations of our program, each time knowing we needed more SENĆOTEN language to fully engage in learning from our homeland (Swallow, personal communication, 2009).

ÁLENENEĆ was the awakening, the mind shift moment when I felt the most connected to our TENEW (land, earth), our language, and our ČELÁNEN (ancestors). This program was an opening for many of us to a WSÁNEĆ SENĆOTEN worldview. Of course we are born WSÁNEĆ, but for many of us younger people we have grown up with WENITEM education system, with little to no language or culture. Being out
on the ŠĆEN,NE (ocean), smelling the saltwater, and paddling to our TELEȚÂČES (islands) was the most spiritual, powerful feeling that I ever felt. It was like my ancestors were awaiting my transformation of life, waiting for me to wake up my inner spirit and be open for change.

Many of the apprentices were a part of the ÁLENENEĆ trip and we have spoken together about how it affected our lives and pushed us to want to learn more. This is where our Elders saw something within us that they wanted to nurture.

HÁ,EQ SEN CE NE SELWÁN LÁ,E TFE ÁLENENEĆ
(I remember my Elders on our homeland)

I remember going on one of our exertions when I was pregnant with LIQITIÁ. We were going to SENINES to pull invasive plants. We were all to gather at the Brentwood Bay Marina. One of our Elders was waiting for us there and was he ever strong. He would come on all of our outings to ŁÁU,WEL,NEW Mountain, the SÁSU (beach), and TELEȚÂČES (islands). He lived his youthful life on the sea, so he was excited to be going out with us that morning. We were all ready to leave when we saw our other Elder show up. We were surprised as he was not as mobile; his was vision not as good as it used to be, and he needed assistance to navigate around. We were worried whether he would be able to make it up the bank and the hill. He had his son
help him out of the car and we mentioned the bank and we mentioned the hill. We were informed that he had been ready since 5:30 that morning. How could we turn our respected Elder around and say no? So he came. He was grinning ear-to-ear; he was so happy to be out on the water. We needed two strong men to carry him to shore and escort him to the top of the bank. He was happy as he could be. I was supposed to go and help pull broom but I sat there and listened to the Elders sit on top of the hill and reminisced about the old days instead.

They spoke about ųENES (whale) I KEL,ŁOLEMEĆEN (orca).

Their Elders told them of times when the whale and orca would jump and swim in our bay. You would see them swim to the arm and never see them emerge. They said we have a very deep SṈÁĆEĆ (bay) here. We all looked out on our bay thinking of the times when our relatives of the ocean would come and visit our ancestors. The sun glistened beautifully on the waves that day, and I saw my Elders thinking about the times when they were young. We were silent for a few minutes listening to the leaves
rustle in the wind and I felt a kick from my unborn daughter and tears of happiness emerged, but I held them back (S̱EDEDŦELISIYE, personal journal, May 2009).

YÁ ḋTE OḴ LÁ,E E TŦE ÁLENEŅEĆ ḋTE. HÍSWKE XÁLS SIÁM E TŦE ÁLENEŅEĆ ḋTE. I, DOQ ḋTE OḴ TŦE NE ÁLENEŅEĆ ḋTE (personal communication, STOLȻEŁ, 2010).

This was the song that came to my SELWÁN (respected Elder advisor) STOLȻEŁ when we were camping on WEN,NÁ,NEĆ (Salt Spring Island) on our traditional land. The words are translated, “we are going to our homeland, thank you creator for our homeland. We are going home to my homeland” (personal communication, STOLȻEŁ, 2010). Being out on WEN,NÁ,NEĆ and learning about our WSÁNEĆ culture was the first time that I felt a connection to place. The experience of sitting where my ancestors sat, closing my eyes, envisioning a time where our beautiful SENĆOŦEN language was shared effortlessly around the SONUSE (fire). Not “camp fire” as we call it now but our main source of warmth, our cooking source, and our light.

The echoing of the waves as they crashed along the shore rocked my soul. That yearning, that longing to use a language that felt so foreign, as I struggled to repeat the words were being shared with a bunch of students who all wanted the same thing. We desperately wanted to understand, learn, and speak SENĆOŦEN and to know and
think as our ancestors did. My generation has grown up in a different time where being raised on our TELEŢÁČES (islands) and ŠČEN,NE (ocean) was something we did as a trip, an outing, not the way my great-grandparents lived. Our first attempt to stay only in SENĆOTEN was not a success but rather for many of us, a frustration. It was a learning curve as our minds were not quite ready to participate in it yet, and many of us were afraid, or so accustomed to speaking in WENITEM,KEN (English). We could not or were not ready spiritually or mentally to stay in immersion. However, this was a realization that we must work harder, and not give up hope (SXEDŦELISIYE, personal journal, August 2011).

TÁĆEL, NONET TŦE SKÁL ŁTE (Our language has finally arrived)

QELEQESĆEN booked something very special for us this year. We went to STOWELL Lake Farm on WEN,ÑÁ,NEĆ (Salt Spring). We had our meetings in a beautiful large wooden room where we held a massive think-tank-session. We slept in huts and ate organic tasty food. The morning we left STOWELL Lake we made a pact that for the whole day we would only speak SENĆOTEN, no WENITEM,KEN. This was our second attempt to do an immersion day from STÁSEN.

When I awoke I almost forgot that this was our immersion day. I lay there for a moment and wondered if PENÂWEN was going to remember. ISTÁ YÁ (let’s go)!
PENÁWEN said, so I knew that he was committing himself completely. We jumped up and went to find STOLČEĻ so we could do a morning SDIWIEĻ (prayer) with him. There were many of us there that morning. We packed up and headed to our camping site. It has become an annual STÁSEN haven, that beautiful point at WEN,NÁ,NEČ.

We set up our tents, ate, relaxed, sang songs, and ate again. It was interesting to see everyone working so hard to stay in SENČŌFEN. I was resting on the beach with my SÁĆs NENSIMU, her very first attempt at having a SENČŌFEN day. I was sleeping and I woke up and said, “where’s PENÁ?” She responded, “EWE NE WENITEM, ṢEN.” Oh! O ŚO. I said, “EXIN OĆE ET PENÁWEN SIÁM?” She responded, “MÁN” (dad), and closed her eyes and slept. I was so very proud of my aunt for sticking to her guns and even though she just joined the team, it showed her commitment. I was inspired and worked really hard and did not speak any more English that day. It was a fun, easygoing day. I was not stressed at all.

It was interesting when we had visitors approach us, we all refused to speak WENITEM, ṢEN and they did not know what to do. They got awkward and even put their heads down and backed away. We all just laughed really hard and it empowered us; it was like we jumped over a large hurdle that we kept tripping over before. We ended the night with a competitive game of SLEHÁL. What a night! Why was our first
attempt at an immersion day not successful? Maybe we were not there in our language proficiency? Maybe there were too many people? Not enough committed to staying in the language before? Reflecting back on this subsequent day I feel like it was a monumental moment and a sign of growth. This was a milestone for measuring our language growth as apprentices (SXEDŦELISIYE journal, 2013).

QELEQESEĆEN shared with us that he was swimming, even drowning at times and told us how he struggled with not understanding what was going on. It was funny; from my perspective I thought he was doing just fine. I think I was just excited that everyone was having fun and it was an experience that I will never forget.

Figure 8. WEN,NÁNEĆ ÁLENEĆ Trip.
WICISTEL (Master-Apprentice) Initiative

YOŦ OL U, ČENEŅITEL Ľ TE MEQ TŦE WIŁNEW SNOUEľ EŤ WSÁNEČ. U, HECOSTEŅ TTÁ, E NEŦE SNEPENÊ SNOUEľ TIÁ, S,XELTOW SIÁM. NIĽ E TŦE ŠXENÁŇs ĽTE TTÁ, Ė ČSU ČENEŅITEL TŦE MEQ SÁN E ŁÁ,E EŤ WSÁNEČ. NIĽ E TŦE S,ÓSES ĽTE MEQ TŦE ŚWUÁLI, I, E TŦE MEQ SṬELITĶEľ SNOUEľ TŦE ŚWUÁLI SELSOSES.

**WICISTEL (Master-Apprentice) logo translation**

This design shows the teachings that the people in WSÁNEĆ are always helping one another. It is the law and belief of the WSÁNEĆ people to help one another.

“In the logo, the faces on the outside are our parents, and inside are the faces of our children. The fire in the middle is the SENĆOŦEN language. Within our Master-Apprentice sessions we are always practicing our SENĆOŦEN Language. It is the responsibility of each one of us to pass down our teachings and give them to our children, our nieces and nephews, our grandchildren, and those yet to be born within all of our homes and villages. “Don’t let the fire out.” It is the life of our language within the fire of the design, my respected ones” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

First of all, I would like to raise my hands to Leanne Hinton and the Indigenous people in California that have created, participated, and documented the Master-Apprenticeship (MAP) model. WSÁNEĆ has learned from their research, books, and workshops. I will now discuss the significance of partaking in my own MAP experience.
**WICISTEL (Master-Apprentice Relationships: Teachers Teaching the Teachers)**

We began this initiative in 2009 with funding from the Vancouver Foundation. Initially we partnered apprentices with our current language instructors. It was a good fit as our current language teachers are all approaching retirement. Because of the decline of our fluent Elders, we had to be creative and partner people in small groups. For example, when we began, we utilized 2 to 3 apprentices to work with one Elder (STÁSEN poster, 2012).

**Before the master-apprentice**

As SENĆOTEN apprentices, one part of our job was to shadow the SENĆOTEN teachers. This was our first pairing with a fluent speaker. We would watch what the teachers were teaching, photocopy notes for them, or even write the notes down on the board. I would observe, participate, read things off the board, and have my ears opened. My mentor would give me resources such as notes, SENĆOTEN word lists. The most cherished moments were when STOLĆEŁ would tell us our history, place names, and IĻEĆSILEN TFE SYESES (passing down our
teachings and history). I did not even know at the time about language revitalization and strategies. All that I knew was that I wanted to learn my language. I did not know how I was going to do this but I knew if I was able to spend time with our language teachers and Elders that I would pick up something. I did not intend to become a SENĆOTEN teacher. My intentions were to integrate what I was learning into my classroom as a general teacher, as I was busy trying to finish my B.Ed. at the University of Victoria.

Our mentors (STOLÇEŁ and ĆOSINIYE) were funded through the Master-Apprentice Program (MAP) with First Peoples Heritage and Language Culture Council as apprentices with a senior speaker (their mother) in 2008 before we began. Following this the organization approached SŢÁSEN TŦE SENĆOTEN to do a workshop with the newly hired apprentices and elders. This workshop informed our group about the work that Leanne Hinton had done with the Indigenous peoples of California and laid out the “do’s and don’ts” of a Master-Apprenticeship model.

The WŞÁNEĆ MAP sessions did not follow the typical 1 mentor, 1 apprentice model, due to the fact that WŞÁNEĆ did not have enough mentors at the time.

Some of our SŦÁSEN apprentices that completed their 2-year MAP training became Mentors themselves through the SENĆOTEN Bachelor of Education program.
In 2010, I asked STOLÇEŁ to be my mentor. I knew he was a really busy man, and he needed his summer break. I asked him if we could meet 2 hours in the morning so that it would not interfere with any of his responsibilities or yard work. So we would meet at 5:30 in the morning. My youngest daughter TEILIYE, who was almost 4 months old, would come and listen to her SILE (grandpa) SDIWIEŁ (pray), and I XIĀM ĆO (tell stories) around his fire. I remember I would jump up and fly out the door in the early morning. STOLÇEŁ could probably hear me a mile away because all the SKELAXE (dogs) on Latess road would howl up a storm. The first goal I set for myself was to learn how to DIWIEŁ: acknowledge my creator XĀLS and everything that XĀLS has made on this earth. I really related to STOLÇEŁ’s story about wanting to be able to speak to XĀLS in our own language. So I observed and listened for a few weeks, then he would have me repeat after him, and finally he would get me to lead. However, favorite sessions were when he would tell me our SXIĀM (stories) of
LELEŦEN (eel woman), SXÍEQES (raccoon), SĆANEW (salmon), and of course SQ,TO (raven) and all his own adventures (SXEDŦELISIYE, personal journal, August 2011).

Centering myself around prayer has helped my little family and now my own girls lead prayers in our home, and at our relative’s gatherings. They will even do their acknowledgments if we go to restaurants.

STOLȻEŁ was not the only mentor I had. ĆOSINIYE also led sessions with SI,OLTENOT and me. ĆOSINIYE took a hands-on approach and would also have us practice our reading in SENĆOŦEN. Every time it was my time to read my hands would get sweaty and my ears felt like they were on fire. We created a lot of songs and slideshows, and she would use a lot of imagery and story-sequencing.

Doing a Master-Apprentice (what FPCC now call Mentor-Apprentice) is something I would love to start up again. I feel like I would be able to move to another level of proficiency. Just the other day, I went for lunch with the apprentices and STOLȻEŁ and we stayed in the language the whole time. My daughters were there as well and their SILE noticed my oldest NENE TOLISIYE listening to what we were saying. He was really happy she understood pieces of what we were saying. PENÁĆ, her SÁĆs (uncle), told her in the language to keep up the good listening and not to
worry because she would understand us completely soon, and to never give up trying (PENÁĆ, personal communication, 2014). It was an awesome moment. TOLISIYE led the SDIWIEŁ, gave thanks for our food in SENČOTÁN, and I could see how proud her SILE was of her. I am so proud of my daughters. I was an adult when I learned how to say a prayer and my daughters who are 9, 6, and 4 years old can say a prayer. It is effortless for them and part of their normal day to acknowledge our world and families around them through SENČOTÁN.

Figure 10. HÍSWKE XÁLS SIÁM (Thank you great creator)
ČELÁÑEN,KEN (Ancestral voices) Initiative

SCÁs SCÁ ŁTE SNÁs ET ČELÁÑEN,KEN. IŁECILEŅĆO TFE SELEWÁN ĖČs KÁL,TEŅś TFE ŁEN S,XIÁM. XIÁM ĆO I, U ĖSE LÁ,E TFE S,XIÁM E TFE MEQ. TELÉ,TOFEL,NEW I, U S,YESES ĆO ĆE KÁL,TEŅś. WU,ČISTENĆOl ĖŚU NIŁ. (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).
ČELÁNEKEN (Ancestral voices) logo translation

This logo represents the project we call Ancestral Voices. To be consistent with all other programs and projects the name was changed to a SENČOTEN name, which is ČELÁNEKEN. “ČELÁNEKEN refers to stories told by recorded Elders. The stories of our Elders contain the beliefs and history of Wsáneč. The image is made in the traditional spindle whirl fashion, where the image repeats itself and moves in the direction of a cycle. The human figures represent our storytellers, who are passing on the language and teachings, which are in the form of the animals that are represented in the image” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

Even though we work around the clock revitalizing and preserving our SENČOTEN language, it is still critically endangered. We have less than 5 first language speakers left in Wsáneč. We are so lucky that our Elders thought about the changing times and the future and spent hours documenting their stories and writing down hundreds of wordlists and sentences. At times it feels like they are communicating through the recordings. Related to this, I would like to share an interesting story.

During an Elders’ session the Elder we were sitting with was listening to an archival recording of Phillip Pelkey (PP). The Elder on the recording (PP) could not
remember a place name and the Elders we were sitting with was trying to figure out what he (PP) was referring to. The Elder we were sitting with said, “SMOḴEĆ,” and the Elder (PP) on the recording said, “EWE, EWES SMOḴEĆ” (No, not point Roberts). We all looked at one another, laughed and thought what a coincidence that both Elders (the our Elder we were sitting with and Elder (PP) on the recording) were thinking along the same lines. It felt like they were having a conversation across time.

This next section will discuss our archiving and mobilizing initiatives and how it has helped my language learning.

ČELÁ𝐍EN,KEN (Archiving and Mobilizing Ancestral Voices)

This was our most recent initiative that began in 2012 with funding from First Peoples Heritage and Language Culture Council (FPHLCC). Thankfully, ṢÁṈEĆ has a history of language documentation. We continue to reach out to the community in order to safeguard all language materials through digitization.

As a team, our next step is to figure out how to mobilize the materials. First Voices (http://www.firstvoices.com) has supported the development of an online language curriculum utilizing Language Tutor (FVLT). In addition, in partnership with the University of Northern Texas, we are engaged in a SENĆOTEN Dictionary project.
We are also currently creating a language lab, in partnership with the University of Victoria, to be housed within our school.

Networking has been key to many of the recent initiatives that we have been working with. When I was in my Bachelor’s program we took a Linguistic 181 course. We looked at Tim Montler’s work that was published years before and we had so many questions about the reasoning behind his translating and transcribing, as well as the history behind these stories. I approached my professors Adam Werle and Janet Leonard about possibly reaching out to Tim Montler. We, as young apprentices, had only heard that he worked with our Elders in the late 70s, 80s and early 90s and then disappeared into the US after that. Adam emailed Montler and to our surprise he got a quick reply back and forwarded his conversation to me.

After communicating with Montler, he shared many audio files of Elders that were given to him and some that he recorded. We utilized them right away; our SÀÁSEN team has studied these recordings and transcribed many with other Elders. In my classroom I use the recordings of stories and play it while my children have free time in the classroom.

Connected to this, intonation is a topic that interests me. The only recordings that we have are of Elders in their 70s or 80s. I often think about the past and wonder
what a young woman or a child might have sounded like. The majority of the recordings are male. Sometimes I hear people say that the younger generation speaks too fast; however, in many of the recordings that we have listened to, the Elders speak so fast they blend or drop entire sounds. This is fascinating and interesting to study. I think that personality also has an influence on the way that one speaks. However, I agree with my colleagues on the influence of ḢENITEM, ḢEN on SENĆOTEN. We do need to try the best we can to stay away from anglicizing our SENĆOTEN. This is very challenging because ḢENITEM, ḢEN is our first language. These tapes and recordings are very precious to our department as it gives us a glimpse into the past and fluent SENĆOTEN.

We hear people speak about the old way of speaking and the modern way of speaking, and one day we might be like the Hawaiians and have a dictionary of the ancient SENĆOTEN and the modern SENĆOTEN. There are so many new terms that are being created that the Language Authority, SELWÁN (mentor advisors), and apprentices have a lot of work ahead of them. One recommendation from the STÁSEN Department is the creation of a lexicon committee that will work closely with our Language Authority.
Now that we have an immersion program we have been faced with many challenges in terms of scientific and mathematical terminology. Many new words have been created this year, and the majority of the terms have been changed into SENĆĆOŦEN. First we analyze the old recordings, look at draft dictionary notes to see if our Elders may have discussed certain terms, and if they referenced something we will use that term from the recording. Listening to the recordings and creating new curriculum go hand in hand. The next section XETSITES will go more in depth about the curriculum development.
XETSITES (Curriculum development) Initiative

NIŁ ĆE Ć,SE LÁ,E E TFE SKÁL XTIT. U ĆEŅITEL SE LȚE OL ĆENTOL TFE WUIĆISTENEK SIĂM I TFE SELEWÁN SIĂM SU WICIST SE. XETSITES SE TFE ĄLI STĂŅES U ČEOUES OL TFE SKÁL ĽTE. STITEM OL ŚĆÁs TFE ŚĆÁs EŤ ŁNINEŁ. U H.ĘŚILEŇ OL TFE ĄLI SNEPENEKŚ I TFE SYESES, ĽTE. SU WICIST ĽTE OL TFE ŚŤŚs E TFE SKÁL ĽTE I TFE SXENĀNś ĆLE E LÁ,E E TÍÁ WSÁNEČ. ŁO,E ĆO LÁTeņ TFE Sā,ÞIAM ĆSE LÁ,E TFE ĆELÅŅEN I TFE SELEWÁN LE ĽTE I TFE WICISTENś I TFE SKÁLS. NIŁ ĆE TFE EĽTÁLNĚW LÁ,E TFE S,XELTOW TĪA, U HIWESTES TFE SXÅLEŁ TFE EĽTÁLNĚW TEW U XENĀN ĖŤ ŁNINEŁ. U ĆOČES OL TFE ŚN(310,901),(483,917)ĀTUW Ćś OŃESTEN ĖŤ ŁNINEŁ NIŁ ĆE Ć,SXÅLEŁ ĽTE (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).
XETSITES (Curriculum development) logo translation

This logo shows a “human figure that represents the WSÁNEĆ people honouring our writing system. We give acknowledgement to its use in what has been developed to date and our ongoing progress in materials being developed.

In collaboration with our respected SENĆOŦEN teachers and our respected Elders, we work together on what is necessary to pass down and teach to our children. We use the gift that was given to our people, the SENĆOŦEN alphabet. The alphabet has proven to be an essential element in the revitalization of our language. We will develop all of our material using only SENĆOŦEN to encourage the use of our sacred language. It is very important to pass down all of our disciplines, teachings, history, and the ways of our WSÁNEĆ people in the material being developed. We have created books from recordings and translated existing books to accommodate our language within our belief system” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

This section on XETSITES will describe the STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN curriculum development initiatives. There have been so many projects on the go that I will highlight only a few in this section.
XETSITES (SENĆOTEN Curriculum and Materials Development)

In order to grow the amount of curriculum and materials that our immersion school and community needs, we have initiated several Traditional Story projects and a SENĆOTEN beginner reader’s project. We currently have a curriculum development team that is creating Kindergarten and Primary (K-3) immersion materials in order to fill this need.

Many times I have thought to myself, and other apprentices have expressed the same thoughts, about how easy English teachers have it. They can go to the store, the library, or on-line and “BAM” there are teaching resources at their fingertips. However, all Indigenous language teachers know that if you have an idea or a lesson that you want to conduct you better be prepared to create, translate, and illustrate it yourself.

We are fortunate to have a computer digital master and three artists on our team. When they are not teaching they are making books, posters, and resources for our classrooms. They use InDesign creative suites, Photoshop, bamboo art sketchpads, and iBook programs, and are helping to create and digitize many of the stories that they work on. Many of the apprentices have taught themselves how to use these complicated programs and have produced beautiful digitized books such as SPÁẼT I
SQTO (raven and bear), that have only been passed down orally until now. All the materials produced from STÁSEN use WSÁNEĆ art designs. We want our artwork to represent our culture, and acknowledge our ancient designs and color use is just as important as revitalizing SENĆOŦEN. Our artists are passionate about making sure we are exposing our WSÁNEĆ students to WSÁNEĆ art.

We have spent every summer making resources and have labellers to help translate existing English books. Our Elders and more proficient apprentices make the books. Elders will translate the books orally and the apprentices will then type out and label the books.

Community involvement is another initiative that we are always stirring toward. We are currently creating on-line lessons, and a dictionary that will be in paperback, as well as on-line with recordings. LE,NONET (immersion school) parents also receive parent-kits that have flash-cards, mini-posters, CD’s with songs or sentences on them, as well as some short stories.

Many, if not all, of the materials and resources made are used in our LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW immersion program.
LE,NOÑET SCUL,ÁUTW

NIŁ ĆE SXEL,TOWs TŦE LE,NOÑET SCUL,ÁUTW TIÁ. NIŁ ĆO TŦE ĆEL,ĆIYEš TŦE EĻTÁĻNEW TŦE SKELÁLNEW I, TŦE ŁKÁŁJ TIÁ. ĆA,ĆI OL TŦE ĆIYE ĆO ELXITEŇs TŦE MOLSEN. XENEŇ,ÁLŅEN TŦE ÁLI OL WILNEW ĆO ĆĆs Ś,ＸＥＮ ĆŇS TŦE ĆIYE SIÁM. XENÁN OL U, ĆSI SKELÁLNEW I, ĆIL SU JISEŇ. XENÁÑ OL ĶI,ＪISEŇs TŦE S,ＸＥＮ ĆŇS TŦE ĆIYE SNOUEŁ TŦE EĻTÁĻNEW. I, U, XENÁN OL ĶI,ＪISEŇs TŦE SKELÁLNEW. Ą,Į SE OL TŦE ŠTELĬKEĻ ĆENTOŁ TŦE SKÁŁ ĽTE XENÁŇ TŦE MEQ ĆELÁ,U SE ŁKÁŁJ (STĀSEN Poster, 2012).
LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW (SENĆOTEN Survival school) logo translation

In the LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW logo “the blue jay, human being, tree, and
the moon are all represented. Our stories tell us that the blue jay was a human being
who always gathered blue berries. Her good work ethic is a WSÁNEĆ value that we
follow. The tree is represented in two forms, as both negative and positive space. The
negative space is the spiritual form of the tree, the non-tangible form. The positive
form of the tree emerges, growing inside the human being who holds a berry/seed
simultaneously as the blue jay. The moon represents a continuum of growth in relation
to the language, values, and teachings” (STÁSEN Poster, 2012).

LE,NONET SCUL,ÁUTW SENĆOTEN Survival school was a dream that
came to reality with hard work and determination. This section will discuss the steps it
took to get to where we are today. I will share my personal reflection, our philosophy,
and key methodologies that we implement in our immersion school.

Does WSÁNEĆ community support language revitalization?

In the fall of 2009, as part of the Aboriginal Service Plan (ASP) with the
University of Victoria we conducted a two-fold survey with our WSÁNEĆ nation. We
looked at identifying community members that would be interested in taking the
proposed Bachelors of Education in Language Revitalization and we questioned the community if they wanted language immersion programming at the WSB. Parents were asked if they would send their child to an immersion daycare and pre-school if one were available. WSÁNEĆ community indicated with 98% affirming that they wanted SENĆOŦEN revitalized within their community and 93% answered positively that they would send their child to an immersion daycare and pre-school if one were provided. Once the community indicated that they would send their children to an immersion program we took the leap and implemented our survey findings (STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN Report, 2011).

The LE,NOṈEĆUT W SVTÚLE ŠÁĆOŦEN Survival School

SENĆOŦEN is the medium through which our pre-school, kindergarten, and following grades will be taught. We also follow the B.C. Ministry curriculum. With the inception of our Language Nest in January 2012, the first cohort of students entered full day Kindergarten in September 2013, and will enter Grade One in September 2014. Our plan is to follow this group and lay the pathway for SENĆOŦEN immersion programming for students up to grade three by 2016. Our mission and vision will continue to guide us while we foster and nurture this program.
LE,ÑONET Mission Statement:

Č,SE LÁ,E TFE XAXE TFE SKÁL ËTE.
U,DOT OL TFE SENČOFEN ÅLE E TIÁ WSÁNEĆ.
WAČIST TFE SKÁLS I, TFE Š,ŠXENÁNŠ Č,SE LÁ,E TFE ÁLEÑENEĆ TFE
WSÁNEĆ.
TI TFE S,YESE S U ŠEŠENIST ČENTOL E TIÁ ÁNEĆ I, ČÈ,ČÁČELES E TFE
ŠW,KÁLEĆEN E TIÁ WSÁNEĆ.
SNINU SE TFE I,TOTELNEW I, SIÁM,SET SE TFE EĻTÁLNEW.
SIÁM ŠWELOKE SU NIŁ.

(Translation)

Our language comes from the Sacred One.
SENČOFEN is the original language of this emerging land.
We will teach from the ways and beliefs of our WSÁNEĆ homeland.
Continue to value our history and will move forward with contemporary education
rooted in our WSÁNEĆ worldview.
Our program will model WSÁNEĆ disciplines and values to foster respected families.

LE,ÑONET SCUL,ÂUTW Kindergarten is rooted in WSÁNEĆ values and
culture. We have created an immersion environment (8:00-2:30) where the children
have an opportunity to acquire SENČOFEN language by participating in their natural
surroundings. They participate in outdoor education four afternoons a week (12:30-
2:30).

LE,ÑONET Kindergarten Program language methods and implementation

The program is based on the enhancement of different learning models:
• SENĆOŦEN based curriculum based from TŦE SČELÁNEN ET WSÁNEĆ PUC–WSÁNEĆ 13 ŁKÁLJ Saanich 13 moon cycle.

• SENĆOŦEN Kindergarten Language Essentials (First Nations School Association)

• WIU,SET TŦEN SELTÜRKNEĆENTOL SENĆOTEN Kindergarten adapted HOP curriculum (PE)

• SENĆOTEN TÁLENSaxon Math Kindergarten

• Accelerated Second Language Acquisition Greymorning Skill-sets

• SKEL, SISEŇ SENĆOŦEN Sign Language

• QÁLYN TŦE QÁDEN (Moe the mouse)

• Total Physical Response (TPR)

• Communicative Activities/Master Apprentice Activities

• ÁLEṈENEĆ ŁTE Program “Learning from our homeland”.

• SENĆOŦEN SXÁLEŁ TŦE SENĆOŦEN PUCS (A-Y)

ÁLEṈENEĆ, outdoor education program is the context through which we teach the Kindergarten curriculum. Our SELWÁN (Elders) continue to express the importance of learning from our homeland and encourage us to teach our younger ones to be stewards of the TŦENEW (land). Place based learning and field trips throughout our territory teach our children their sense of belonging to place. It also fosters a
healthy lifestyle as they hike, climb mountains, and trek through bushes and forests. Not only are they being exposed to all our natural elements they are also learning about the different eco-systems.

Utilizing a Nature Kindergarten program validated our SELWÁNs wishes. We incorporated similar guidelines from Sooke’s Nature Kindergarten pilot project. A Nature Kindergarten provides young children with large amounts of time in natural outdoor settings where they can play, explore, and experience natural systems and materials found there (Wellhousen, 2002). Engaged outside in all types of weather, children and educators investigate natural phenomenon and learn about the place in which they live.

We have borrowed the Swedish expression, “There is no bad weather, just bad clothing.” We purchased “muddy buddy” rain gear, and all students purchased rain boots. No weather kept us inside. Some of the weather highlights were ṢAḴーン (snow soccer), and playing tag in a wind storm along the beach.

Safety will always be our primary focus for our program. In the beginning of the school year, we utilize a site behind the ŁÁU,WEL,ЊEW Tribal School where children learn to be safe in nature. We participated in many drills that involved ṢIengkap (cougar) safety, SONUSE (fire) safety, ĖʾEXT TŦE TNEW (earthquake)
safety, boundary games, and NÁJNEĆ EŁTÁLNEW stranger danger. Other sites include KENNES (beach and waterfall) and the WJOŁEŁP (beach and campground).

We will continue to identify sites where children will be exposed to a WSÁNEĆ cultural understanding of place.

Implementing the Greymorning methodology in our immersion program

In 2010, Dr. Stephen Greymorning brought his Accelerated Second Language Acquisition methodology to STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN. His method uses visualization and immersion as the main teaching tools. Many WSÁNEĆ language programs use his method in their language programs. In his article Hinono'eitiinoowu’ and the Work of Language Survival (Greymorning, 2004), Greymorning outlines an extensive list of language immersion programs in which his Arapaho community has been involved. He speaks about the success and the failures in his community, the language levels, and the rate of language loss. Like many Indigenous nations that were looking for inspiration, Greymorning went to Hawai’i and networked with the Māori people to observe their efforts to save their Heritage Language.

Greymorning’s journey of building an immersion program closely mirrored the journey that WSÁNEĆ took in creating our LE,NOŦE SCUL,ÁUTW (SENĆOŦEN survival school). During his workshop, he highlighted their process: seeking funding
and writing proposals, enlisting community support, finding willing participants, hiring teachers, and building an immersion curriculum.

One impressive factor was Greymorning’s evaluation of the potential teachers who were going to be working with the children. The interview process consisted of a 30-minute, video-recorded interview of potential teachers engaging with children. As noted by Greymorning: “It was interesting to see that when actually faced with having to speak Arapaho to the children, some of the best speakers could not get beyond their barrier of feeling it made little sense to speak to children if they could not understand and answer back” (2004, p. 219). Greymorning noted that the number one challenge in the beginning stages of creating an immersion program was that the staff often fell back into English. We faced the same challenge when we first started our pre-school here in Wsáneč. Greymorning emphasized that the teachers needed inspiration and proper immersion training. He took his teachers to Hawai‘i to find the motivation and skills that spark the “fire within” to teach through an immersion environment.

In 2013, our S̱Tá̱SEN program travelled to Hawai‘i for the International Conference on Language Documentation and Conservation, as well as the Chief Atham conference in Kamloops, B.C. While in Hawai‘i one question posed to the Hawaiian teachers was, “where are your Elders in the classrooms?” The response was
a bit surprising. We were told the majority of the teachers involved in the immersion
school are second language learners, however, when they started they had more Elders
in the classrooms. They found it was the Elders that were slipping back into English.
So for this reason, as well as the energy that it takes to be in the classroom, they did
not have any Elders directly in the classroom. They said their Elders are involved with
other initiatives within the school, and are involved but not in the classrooms on a
daily basis (HILO field study, personal communication, 2013). We can relate to their
story. We too have experienced Elders using English in our immersion programs in
WSÁNEĆ; it is a tough situation, but we are moving forward. We now have
apprentices and our mentors (second language learners) who are able to run the
programs in full immersion.

Teacher-Learner

Given that SÍÁSEN TFE SENĆOTEN is at the building capacity stage, we
have created an immersion program with teachers who are not first language speakers
or fully fluent. I am one of those teachers. Without knowing about the article How to
teach when the teacher is not fluent (Hinton, 2003), SÍÁSEN followed many of
Leanne Hinton’s suggested strategies such as “lesson proper” and “rituals”. “Lesson
“proper” is learning language for a particular lesson and “rituals” which helps to create repetitive language for daily routines (Hinton, 2003, p. 80).

When I first started in the Language Nest, I would have labels of questions or phrases and recipe cards with my teacher phrases close at hand, until I did not need them. I would research my lesson, sit with my mentor, and create lessons, activities, and songs. On my own I would create a song from my notes and then have my mentor edit it. We would repeat phrases like “YÁ ȚEĆSİSEṈ” (go wash your hands) and demonstrate the routines everyday until it was known. Then I would review the language alongside my students. Knowing terminology for discipline and classroom management is critical; then teachers need informal language to carry them through the day. We used visuals and TPR to demonstrate this to our students. For example, we would use cultural teachings such as JENI (wild woman) that teaches children about listening and appropriate behaviour. Hinton coined the term “classroom patter” to describe this language (2003, p. 81). Storytelling can be seen as a task that only a fluent speaker would be able to do. Hinton discusses the role of proper lessons in helping teacher-learners with storytelling, including the importance of working closely with one’s mentor on language needed to conduct a class. Storytelling can be challenging but with the help of visuals, drama, and your mentor, this task is not as
huge as it seems. Chief Atham has shown us through the TPR storytelling workshops that even a semi-fluent teacher can achieve this task. Having a mentor at our side helps a teachers’ language growth and creates a more fluent learning environment.

“Am I ready?”

On Stage

What happens to one that gets pushed out on stage too soon before having a chance to rehearse, or study the script?

They hope they pull it off, save face.

Are they doing it –the play justice? Will the production falter? Can the play continue on with actors knowing only half or less of the script? Or what if you can’t read up to par or memorize your lines?

(SXEDŦE敳ISIYE, personal journal, 2011)

When I was tasked with establishing our Language Nest, I had only read secondary sources. I wished there had been a guide that told me how to set one up back then. It was a frightening and exciting time, as I had just graduated with my B.Ed. I spent the whole summer creating curriculum, and PENÁWEN NE STOLES (partner) renovated the old Little Raven building where my SENĆOŦEN journey began. I was coming full circle to the place were I first heard SENĆOŦEN and now I was going to be the SENĆOŦEN teacher.

My twitching eye and restless nights faded once I jumped into the adrenaline rush of teaching. Our pilot program started in 2011 with 8 students from 8:00-4:30,
five days a week, which was a really good model. I learned a lot of SENĆOŦEN that year, and had my second NENE (daughter) LIQI attended the program. It was difficult for the first semester having to teach my daughter, who was not ready to share her TÁN (mom) with her classmates. I would get home and head straight to bed as my brain was drained from being immersed in a new way of thinking.

Due to funding and licensing requirement changes in 2012, the program looked more like a typical preschool program (8:00-11:30). Sustainability is always an issue, and we had to balance Nominal Role funding requirements with program length.

In the summer of 2012, I started the Masters in Language Revitalization at the University of Victoria. The course content was beneficial but what was really amazing was networking with other Indigenous communities. I was able to see where we currently sit in our Language Revitalization planning in comparison with the other nations (e.g. self-government NWT). One thing that came out of the readings and lectures was the need for our children to be immersed in their immersion programs for at least 5 hours per day. As such, the fact that our program was cut to 2.5 hours has never sat well with me. This is a challenge we really need to confront moving into the future.
My cohort is moving on

This year, 2014 I made the difficult decision to stay in SENČOTEN Kindergarten. This meant that my cohort of 17 students (10 SU,WÍKOŁ (boys), 7, SŁENSŁENEČOŁ (girls), many of which I have had since they were 3 years old, would be leaving my nest. I have potty-trained many of them, and witnessed their SENČOTEN growth. At first they would look at me “like a deer in the headlights” when we would speak SENČOTEN to them. Now they joke, create their own songs, and use language without being prompted, all in SENČOTEN. They are the first children to become emergent SENČOTEN readers in Kindergarten and it fills my heart with hope.

I was talking to a friend about the detachment issues that I was feeling. I was joking with her saying; “no one prepared me for this in the education program.” I said “I guess when you have a regular class you know that they will be moving on every year. But I have had them for 2.5 years, as I sobbed into a tissue” (SXEDFELISIYE, personal journal, 2013).

Creating two immersion programs (pre-school and kindergarten) has been very time consuming and I have sacrificed much. I have worked many 14-hour days, every Sunday and all summer for two years, as well as being a full-time graduate student, and
a mother of three. I felt my energy was spent and the prospect of creating a Grade One program is something I choose not to do. In addition, the SENĆOŦEN Bachelors of Education program is coming to the end and I have seen the growth in those soon-to-be teachers. I am confident and comfortable with the thought of my teammates taking on Grade One and my LE, NONET STELITKEŁ.

I need time to finish my Masters, build on my kindergarten curriculum, and slow down and focus on my own family’s language learning. Those beautiful gifted children have changed my life and I am happy that we will be merging our Grade One and Kindergarten programs through our ÁLENEĆ (outdoor education programming), recesses, and our morning prayers.

**Bringing the language home**

Fishman (2001) emphasizes that language in the home is essential for language transmission. Hinton’s newest book has created a flood of excitement. WSÁNEĆ families are eager to try the Hernandez family plan model from *Bringing our Languages Home: Language Revitalization for Families* (BLH) (Hinton, 2013). The last chapter (BLH) describes a family plan similar to the master-apprentice plan; however, the Hernandez families from Kawaiisu have created an easy-to-follow roadmaps that can incorporate the whole family, from Elder to child. Some of the
activities include recordings for the entire family and immersion activities for children.

I am hoping to create a SENĆOTEN family plan this year that will include my own little family and my children’s grandmothers who are their caregivers when we are working. I would like to include more extended family as we develop our family plan.

STÁSEN is about to embark on implementing “bringing the language home” plan (Hinton, 2013), as we prepare a new SENĆOTEN initiative that involves parents and their children called ĆENSIST, TOLȳ HÁLE (holding hands together). These new programs will be run after school, and we will provide a light supper and offer bus transportation. My new project goal is to create a new initiative titled ҠAK I TÁN (baby and mothers) program where we look at babies’ first language acquisition. My hopes are to create an immersion environment for infants, create baby resources for local Head Starts, and create infant-toddler rooms. We want to start the transmission of SENĆOTEN earlier than pre-school. We want our babies to become first language speakers. We have not had a SENĆOTEN first language speaker in over 70 years. This is an area of interest and I will be exploring this area in the next years to come.

My partner and I will be actively involved in POLŠENITEL (soccer) with many of my immersion students (U8 team) and my middle child LIQĪTIÁ. We will
conduct our practices/drills in SENĆOŦEN. We will be teaching soccer terminology to our players and create SENĆOŦEN soccer resources for parents to learn.

Another, part of ĖNSIST,TOLW HĀLE is having SENĆOŦEN classes for parents. Apprentices will teach (Accelerated Second Language Acquisition) Greymorning classes for parents and “Where is your keys?” classes that involve sign language, SENĆOŦEN, and advanced immersion places for more proficient community members. We are constantly looking at ways to get the parents involved, and this is an exciting time. We, the apprentices are looking forward to participating in these new programs.

**Summary**

Each STÁSEN TŦE SENĆOŦEN initiative has been significant to my language learning. I have found out that I am a hands-on-learner and when I learn something I remember better when I teach someone else. I admire my partner who can read something and store it in his memory. I need to accept the way that I learn and draw from my strengths. I truly believe the fire is within all of us. We all learn in our own way, we just have to find which way is our way to learn. I feel lucky that I was hired as an apprentice and was able to spend time with our SELWĀN at our Elders
gatherings, to go out on the ÁLENEĆ (learning from our home land) with them, and to teach our children what our Elders have shared with us. This apprenticeship allowed me to spend time with my mentors and WUČISTEL (MAP) and teach and learn from one another with my children in an immersion environment. This MAP accelerated my language learning and I hope to start another WUČISTEL in the future.

My educational background helped me with XETSITES (curriculum development), but spending time with NE EKO,TEL (my team) and our SELWÁN (respected advisors) gave me a different way to look at curriculum. They taught me how to develop our curriculum from a WSNĆ perspective, immersed with in our own cultural beliefs, and that is something that I could not get at University or from a textbook.

Networking with other Indigenous communities and sharing methods of implementation has helped our curriculum development journey. Our team is comfortable with technology and this has given us all an advantage as we create new materials for our school and SENČOFEN community programs. One goal that my partner and I have this year is to study more of the ČELÁNEN,KEN recordings and transcribe them in SENČOFEN in order to study the intonation and the flow, as I want to one day eliminate the English accent.
LE, NONET SCUL, ĀUTW SENČOFEN Survival immersion school is where my professional career as a teacher began and it is where I will stay. There is no going back to teaching in an English program for me; I love the challenge and the connection to culture, our ancestors, and our land. It feels so meaningful and I do not mind working over and beyond. One of sayings I heard in Hawai‘i was if you feel comfortable and content in where you are then you must work harder, 110% no less (personal communication, HILO 2013 conference). Compliancy is something I will not do, but instead continuously strive to better my language proficiency, teaching practices, and resource development, and continue to grow along side my students, fellow apprentices, and my mentors. My mentors would always remind us that we never stop learning. Even at their age, they felt like there was so much more to learn.

As stated by Hermes (2007), “the Indigenous-immersion method is quickly being recognized as one of the most effective tools for restoring Indigenous languages”. As I embarked on this project, the following words of Mary Hermes echoed through my head:

Being a progressive teacher educator, I had a golden opportunity to research, design, select, and then enact the curriculum I was planning. I want to write
about this year in a way that is accessible to others who may be contemplating starting immersion schools (2007, p. 54).

This is the message that I want to share along with Ortá ÁSen wants to share, my hopes are that by sharing my language journey it might awaken something from within, ignite that fire, or stoke a fire even more. Our team is working in all areas of language revitalization. Maybe someday, someone will read our story, and the words of Mary Hermes will also be reflected in their Indigenous language revitalization journey.

Hísw'ke Síam Čens Stołes I Leláneñ te ne sxíăm.

(Thank-you, respected one, for reading and listening to my story)
Reference


