

“Being T’Sou-ke:

What it means to me to be T’Sou-ke

ŚWĶÁLECĒN: My inner thoughts”

By

Trena Sutton

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Supervisor: Dr. Onowa McIvor

Committee member: Dr. Peter Jacobs

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	2
My Project.....	8
Resources	16
Methodology.....	22
Outcomes	24
References.....	26

Introduction

My family

My name is Trena Lynn Sutton and I am from the Planes family. My granny, Ida Planes, is known as a T'Sou-ke princess by our Nation - the daughter of the hereditary chief, Kwaq a yuk. We are one Nation spread over two villages. Siasun is our second and largest village that hangs on rocky cliffs and beaches over the Salish Sea. This is where my family has lived for thousands of years, and remains to this day. In our family we have a special way of teaching our children. Ida would bring her grandchildren down to Siasun to help pick the tall grass that grows at the beach. In English, Siasun translates to 'slanted down' referring to the physical features of the land of Siasun. Granny Ida taught my mother how to dry, dye and weave with the tall beach grass when she was very young. Ida would sing and speak to her children, grandchildren and great grandchildren in our language. My granny Ida helped raise my mother and taught her what it is to be T'Sou-ke. My mother recalls being a little girl and taking a field trip with her class to the beach in the little town of Sooke, B.C. The teacher and children were in awe with my mother as she identified so many of the organisms at the beach both in English and T'Sou-ke. She could explain which organisms were safe to eat and how to catch and prepare for a meal, or how to preserve for the winter months. My mother Janet learned this from her grandmother, Ida, the last fluent speaker of our language who passed away in 1984.

These are memories that shape who I am as a teacher today. I have been teaching elementary school students full time since 1999. My memories of granny Ida remind me that this is our way of teaching children; get children busy with their hands first and then

they can hear the teachings and take them in while doing weaving, beading, cleaning fish etc. This hands-on interactive methodology of how children learn has influenced me as a teacher and the way I plan curriculum for my grade one and two students. It is a natural way for children to learn, through multitasking and engaging with lessons in a physical, intellectual and spiritual way.

My place

I have been a consistently active member in my community. I am a drum and dance leader as well as a youth mentor. I am on the Tribal Journeys and safety committee. Each Tuesday we have dinner with drumming and dance practice to which six to ten percent of our community attends. Over the years I have helped facilitate various language and cultural activities that fluctuate in attendance. From this I think that the child-focused website that is accessible from home, the band hall, youth centre, schools or anywhere with Internet access is a good start.

Our language

The T'Sou-ke language is a dialect of Straits Salish, as is SENĆOŦEN, the language that my relatives in WSÁNEĆ speak. Growing up I spent much of my time listening to my granny Ida speak and sing in T'Sou-ke. At times I lived with granny Ida and had the opportunity to hear it even more. My favourite sound in the world was listening to my granny speaking, laughing and singing in our language. I have been part of the Big House society for several years where I have spent hundreds of hours listening to Big House speakers speaking mostly in SENĆOŦEN and also in different dialects of

Straits Salish including T'Sou-ke. Listening to Straits Salish and its dialects at Big House and on canoe trips with my family has influenced my understanding of our language.

My family has given me two recordings of granny Ida speaking. One of these is Ida speaking with one of her daughters who was married to a chief from Tsawout, one of the four tribes of W̱SÁNEĆ. At the time of the recording Ida's daughter had lived for over twenty years in Tsawout. In the recording the mother and daughter take turns pronouncing words and phrases in T'Sou-ke and SENĆOŦEN so it is clear to the listener to hear the differences between the dialects. This part of the recording has influenced my language and culture project because the unique dialect of T'Sou-ke can clearly be heard.

I converted the two recordings of granny Ida speaking into digital format. These recordings are important in distinguishing the T'Sou-ke language and how it is similar to and different from SENĆOŦEN. In T'Sou-ke, although we have learners, we currently have no speakers and very few resources of what T'Sou-ke language really sounds like. According to the First People's Culture Council our language is 'sleeping' (<http://maps.fphlcc.ca/fphlcc/sencoten>). T'Sou-ke has ten members that can speak and understand a little of the language and only one listed as a learner (First Peoples' Language Map of British Columbia, 2013, SENĆOŦEN section, para. 2). (However, I believe more people are learning that are not listed on this map.)

T'Sou-ke is a small Nation with 251 members as of February 2013 (tsoukenation, 2013, Welcome to T'Sou-ke section, para. 3). It is situated off the west coast of Canada on Vancouver Island in Coast Salish territory. Our close relatives are the W̱SÁNEĆ people who have fluent SENĆOŦEN speakers and this is, in a broader sense, our language also. The educational website I developed as my Master's project about T'Sou-

ke culture and language entitled 'Being T'sou-ke' recognizes the connection to the WSÁNEĆ while honouring the T'Sou-ke dialect and culture.

My family has said to me for years that the language work I do for T'Sou-ke should be aimed at our young children. My original vision was to work with my relative STOLČEĒ John Elliott and my cousin, Chief Gordon Planes, along with other T'Sou-ke band members, to create an interactive website for everyone but focused on children ages six to twelve to learn about T'Sou-ke culture and language. The website I created on the T'Sou-ke culture and language ended up primarily focusing on children grades one to three, but also T'Sou-ke band members, teachers and community members at large. The website is based on my personal life experiences and teaching as being a T'Sou-ke person.

The website 'Being T'Sou-ke' is based on five major themes of T'Sou-ke culture and life as I experienced them growing up. The five major themes that form the framework of the website are:

- 1) **Being T'sou-ke** - preschool-aged Trena with Granny Ida discussing her own and T'Sou-ke history and identity more broadly;
- 2) **Seafood** - school-aged Trena and seafood harvesting;
- 3) **Canoe** - school-aged Trena canoe family;
- 4) **Ceremony** - school-aged Trena in ceremony; and
- 5) **Teacher** - adult Trena as a teacher.

There are five photographs that I took in T'Sou-ke that graphic design artist, Troy Falk converted to cartoon drawings for each of the categories. Now that the website has been developed, the goal is to continuing building it with contributions from STOLČEĒ (John Elliott) and my cousin, Chief Gordon Planes, along with other knowledgeable T'Sou-ke

members. No other project like this has ever happened in our Nation. However, once the community sees the site that I have created, it may be clearer and more inviting for people to become involved and contribute. School-aged Trena appears as a cartoon image and later will make friends that can be added to the site, such as a carver or an elder that will interact with her in a meaningful way sharing our culture and language with website viewers.

T'Sou-ke is a Canoe Family

T'Sou-ke is a canoe family. A canoe family is several families from our community that are united as a group, bonded by pulling one of our canoes together on a journey to various locations. The term "canoe family" is still used today as a phrase signifying that we paddle together. Canoe paddling, drumming, dancing, singing, weaving, harvesting seafood, growing traditional foods, travelling and carving are some of the activities that sustain us as a Nation. Our language and culture is the core of our identity. When we paddle to other villages we share our language and culture through our songs, protocols, stories and teachings.

Our nation's strength and purpose comes from our canoe journey. Everything we do is in preparation for, or to be on, the canoe journey. What brings us together throughout the winter is activities and preparation for canoe journey: drum and dance practice, making giveaways for canoe journeys, sewing our clothes, practicing paddling, harvest seafood, learning water safety, prayer & smudge, team-building & active living, and community support. If we are going to reawaken our language, I believe that people will be motivated to learn if it is presented as part of our preparation for canoe journey.

Growing up as a Coast Salish girl I was fortunate to have the rich nutrients of the Salish Sea as my primary source of food. In my family, clams, mussels, crab, shrimp, prawns, salmon, halibut, seaweed, sole, sea cucumber, herring row and more made up our daily diet. This kind of diet is rare today. My grandparents owned a seafood market where my family and I worked from a young age. To this day I love the iron rich salty goodness that comes from the Salish Sea more than any other food. In many points in my childhood we experienced trauma and poverty but one thing that was a constant, that I am so grateful for, is the wonderful seafood I had and my part in getting it from the sea to the table. Being out on the water and the land, physically exerting myself to help catch and eat our traditional seafood, is a spiritual experience for me. Collecting seafood is integral to T'Sou-ke identity and how we nurture ourselves. To learn the T'Sou-ke names for our traditional food is paramount for the project because it is so much of who we are. The water and seafood holds our language and spirituality.

As part of a canoe family and spending so much time on the ocean paddling, I have learned the importance of preparing ourselves in every way: spiritually, physically and mentally, as individuals and as a group. Yet, this has never been documented. My research is based on exploring the question, "What does it mean to me to be T'Sou-ke?" Being on many canoe journeys I have learned that having a good experience is dependent on how we prepared before leaving home. How we come together as a group on a canoe journey and the safety and spiritual teachings we apply is what makes the trip a success. All of these ideas and experiences formed the five categories of the website.

My Project

This paper has been included on the website as the 'Final Report' entitled 'Being T'Sou-ke: What it means to me to be T'Sou-ke our identity, culture and language'. My project is an interactive website with the shorter title 'Being T'Sou-ke.' The website includes T'Sou-ke history, aspects of our identity and worldview, our language, culture and spirituality, songs, stories and current initiatives as seen and experienced by me, Trena as the main character. The website is mostly in English with T'Sou-ke (dialect of Straits Salish) phrases, words, video and audio clips focused on the grade two reading level in English with translation, phrases, video and audio recording included throughout in T'Sou-ke. The website was developed using EasyBlog with SiteGround Web Hosting as they offer the most secure framework for Joomla and Wordpress powered sites. Their annual fee is less than \$100, which was the most reasonably priced I could find. Ideally there would not be any fees to keep up the website but the options I found for a website with multimedia such as video and audio clips all had a fee attached. I was not willing to let go of the video and audio clip option to run a free site, mostly because of the importance of hearing the language and not just reading it. The audio component seems imperative to an effective language learning website even if it is only has a few clips to start with. We need to hear the language in order to understand and speak it.

I learned about EasyBlog when I made the decision to hire a professional webpage designer to launch the site to whom I paid \$500 for his technical assistance. Prior to this, I started a Wordpress website on my own and had much difficulty setting a basic layout so I upgraded from the free version to the \$129 version and although it did give me more options (like the ability to add video and audio clips) I still could not get a

handle on the basic layout. As part of my Bachelor Degree in Education I completed an entire fifth year with a science concentration, which included several microcomputer courses qualifying me as a science and computer lab teacher. Although this was in the 90's, I am computer literate and was surprised at the difficulty I had while attempting the site on my own. Teaching elementary students full-time during the week and spending what little time and energy I had left over going in circles trying to format the website myself and getting nowhere became frustrating as I was holding onto the idea that I had to do it all myself. Once I hired a professional from a web design company in Colwood, BC the site finally started to move forward. I provided the designer with the content: writing, images, audio and video clips and detailed explanations of exactly what I wanted. He put it together and got me onto a much more user-friendly program so that I can continue to add to the site independently.

I decided to use five different high definition photos that I took myself in Siasou and at UVic. I also asked a friend to draw very specific images of me when I was younger in my T'Sou-ke clothing and also in regular clothing. I wanted it to be as close to how we would really dress and that is often a mixture of traditional and mainstream clothes. I gave him the five photos with of me with detailed notes and drawings of how it should look. For example, in my family we wear our cedar headbands over our hair with the tie at the front. We have dancing shawls not button blankets. We never use arbutus for things like drum sticks because we have a sacred agreement with that species so we never cut it for use. These and more details might seem small but they symbolize who we are and where we come from as T'Sou-ke people.

The website is mainly for use with children to learn about T'Sou-ke culture and language through answering the question, "What does it mean to me to be T'Sou-ke?" This website can be expanded over time, with more songs and phrases as I continue to collect or be gifted recordings and further language teachings.

The project changed forms several times while I was creating it. My original vision was to have a large degree of community input. Through various circumstances I realized that it would really be just a few of us creating something to represent the entire Nation and so I thought very hard about this. I knew that whatever I created I wanted it to be real. I, then, decided that I could start it as 'What it is to be T'Sou-ke' as I have experienced it. This felt like the most forthcoming viewpoint I could offer at this time. My further goal is that T'Sou-ke people would identify with my accounts and reignite their own enthusiasm for who we are as T'Sou-ke people, and thus, inspire further language revitalization. Secondly, I wanted to create an authentic resource for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers and homeschooling parents to access the Aboriginal Prescribed Learning Outcomes (PLOs) for K-7, as set by the BC Ministry of Education with information and suggested learning activities related to T'Sou-ke. For years, as an Aboriginal Enrichment teacher for grades K-7, I drew from T'Sou-ke teachings in order to meet these PLOs. There is a place for T'Sou-ke people to share our culture and language with each other and also as education for those in the broader society. As a T'Sou-ke person with teaching skills I wanted to bring these two things together, our teachings and the Aboriginal PLOs, in a way that would help people learn about who we are and the goodness and beauty in our ways of life.

Website design

The website background image was originally planned to be the arbutus tree which represents the T'Sou-ke woman creation story. This sacred tree sheds its twisted bark, which allows it to grow in some of the harshest environments. Its strength lies in its deep roots and strong inner core. As a matrilineal nation, I believed this was an important and symbolic framework for our website homepage. While the beauty of this tree is so symbolic of how our tiny nation has survived on a cliff over the Salish Sea thriving in harsh conditions, I decided not to use the scared tree as the framework. I have always had an affinity for the Arbutus tree and growing up I have heard a few variations of the tree as our female creation story and also in the flood stories. However, over the past year I have asked about these stories in T'Sou-ke and I was unable to verify a version that was certainly T'Sou-ke. Many people smile at the discussion and say they have heard some stories of the tree but I was hoping to find the true origins of the story and be confident it would resonate with the community.

In the spring of 2015 our family went camping at the Sooke Potholes - which we have recently reclaimed from the government. My cousin, Chief Gordon Planes, talked with me on the trip about the project and the Arbutus tree stories. He said the stories could come back to us if we keep doing the work of rebuilding our nations. He said that sadly we have lost so much but that we are healing and reconnecting with each other and our ancestors everyday. As we sat along the river at the top of the potholes we both had a strong sense of our ancestors there with us, it was a magical feeling. I learned that day that I tend to want things done instantly and that this is not our way. I realized that while it is good for me to have ambitions of creating good things for my Nation, it is always

good to trust the process and allow things to come without forcing them. To be patient and let things happen but preserve the passion and channel it into other creative paths. Perhaps one day the Arbutus stories will come and I can add them.

I am grateful that these realizations lead me to redesign the layout and fulfill a different vision than I have had for years, that of the cartoon Salish girl being herself. In 2000, I started running regularly and eventually participated in a triathlon. At night I enjoyed writing and drawing in a private journal where I created myself as a T'Sou-ke girl that lived long ago and her gift was running. Although the sea and rivers were our roads, Tree-na (as I called her) would run through the dense forest to bring messages to near by villages. There is something uniquely special about animation and I am proud of how they look superimposed onto the photographs I took. I considered creating generic type cartoon images of a typical looking T'Sou-ke girl and boy for the website. In my nation (as well as many others) this does not exist. T'Sou-ke people are so diverse in many ways, including in appearance. To sketch a proto-type would surely leave people out and that was counterintuitive to the aim of the project. By making the first character as myself, I am not saying: "Here is what 'we' look like", rather, "Here I am, a T'Sou-ke person." Being myself is something that I can share and this is better than creating a fictitious model.

The T'Sou-ke identity originates from the prehistoric stickleback fish. In fact, the English translation of T'Sou-ke is stickleback, and so appears under the first image of my granny Ida and I sitting in the garden over looking Siao sun. This image appears along with the audio clips of my granny's singing & storytelling in the language with some supporting photographs without illustrations added that correspond with the story. The

placement of the text, audio and photographs are in chronological order on the website as they correlate with our historical timeline. The prehistoric stickleback, our history, system of governance government, values and traditions and Ida's life experiences are included there.

In addition to the resources I have listed in my Literature Review below, I have a plethora of stories written by my family that were documented by local historians in Sooke and are part of both the Sooke museum and the BC museum collections. I have permission to use these stories. I have included in the website the ones that relate to my personal experience in some way. It is explicit that everything on the website is unique to us as a Nation and 100% open to be shared. These stories include songs and stories about our sacred places and ways of life.

The first category **Being T'sou-ke** covers:

- i) a personal introduction;
- ii) an introduction of Granny Ida and my family; and
- iii) an introduction to the nation.

It is my hope that this website will resonate with my nation, and encourage us to keep working on revitalizing our language.

Category two **Seafood** focuses on:

- i) the meaning of seafood to me;
- ii) the meaning of seafood and other traditional foods in our nation; and
- iii) our language around seafood.

Category three **Canoe** focuses on:

- i) my personal experiences as a paddler;
- ii) T'Sou-ke as a canoe family; and
- iii) Our language and cultural protocols as a T'Sou-ke canoe family.

Category four **Ceremony** focuses on:

- i) my personal self care as part of our Salish traditions;
- ii) our language and cultural traditions when we are in ceremony; and
- iii) our interactions in ceremonies with other nations.

Category five **Teacher** focuses on:

- i) what led me to become a teacher;
- ii) my life experience as an elementary teacher with most of my career focused on Indigenous enrichment; and
- iii) resources that I developed in part or whole that meet the Aboriginal prescribed learning outcomes of the BC curriculum, K-5.

One of the primary goals of Indigenous Language Revitalization globally, is to determine the state of an endangered Indigenous language and to create language learning programs that meet the learners from where they are at. Over the past few years in my research as a student in the Masters of Indigenous Language Revitalization Program at

the University of Victoria I have discovered that T'Sou-ke our language is sleeping, meaning, we have no current speakers. Thus a website that celebrates "Being T'Sou-ke" and provides stories and songs in our language can encourage us to wake up to both the need for the revitalization of our culture and language and to the ways that we can individually contribute.

A benefit of the website is that the contents can be added to and updated to best reflect our identity and engage as many learners as possible. My desire is that over time, contributions from other resource people will be included, such as from: Chief Gordon Planes, more of granny Ida and her family's voice recordings, STOLØEEL (John Elliott) and other members of T'Sou-ke. The basic first step of our language has been included in the website and from here it will grow so that we will continue learning about our culture and language as it grounded in our identity as a canoe family. T'Sou-ke graphic artist, Mark Gauti, has created most of the logos and designs for our Nation. Eventually he will add his work to the website as he is the main artist and carver who could draw images for children.

Rationale & Preparation

I undertook this project at this time because I walk between two worlds: one being a T'Sou-ke member, and secondly, as a grade one/two public school teacher. I am in a position to do this research because of my connection to T'Sou-ke and my work in the public school system.

As a grade one/two and an Aboriginal Enrichment teacher I am proficient with the B.C. curriculum Prescribed Learning Outcomes (P.L.O.'s). I matched the relevant P.L.O.'s to the website so that Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers can utilize the

website. There is a huge lack of authentic resources in public schools especially for non-Indigenous teachers to use to meet the requirements of the Indigenous P.L.O's. in science, social studies and language arts. This website resource allows a portal into T'Sou-ke culture and who we are as a people.

Resources

Based on an extensive review I came to realize there are very few resources that are specific to the T'Sou-ke people, the SENĆOFEN language and even fewer for T'Sou-ke dialect. I am familiar with many of these resources as I was a contributing author for the 2011 publication *BC First Peoples Learning Resources: Books for Use in K-7 Classrooms*. Further to this, during my Master's coursework I reviewed the literature and publications that have been produced since that date. None of the existing resources have learning tools that connect directly to the BC curriculum learning outcomes. In addition, some resources are difficult to access as there were a limited number printed and have been misplaced over time. This points directly to the importance of developing a publically accessible website for such resources, and in this case, T'Sou-ke specific. Below is an annotated summary of the existing publications that I included in the website or that inspired my thought processes while creating. Some are used in the "Resources" section of the website to be accessible for parents, teachers and community members to learn about T'Sou-ke culture and language.

BC First Peoples Learning Resources: Books for use in K-7 classrooms

In 2011, FNEESC (First Nation's Education Steering Committee) hired seven Indigenous women and teachers including myself to write an on-line resource titled BC First Peoples Learning Resources: Books for use in K-7 classrooms (FNEESC, 2011). This resource was created primarily to support teachers in selecting appropriate authentic Indigenous texts (FNEESC, 2011). My role was to review resources, write synopsis, recommendations, reading level and connection to the Learning Outcomes of the curriculum. Because this publication included almost all Indigenous resources available to teachers it was an excellent reference for me to use as I created a website intended to meet the same audience with some of the same learning outcomes. What the resource is missing is the learning tools for the learners to use. However, it is an informative list of Indigenous resources and offers a good sense of reading and interest level by grade.

Two books: *The green book of language revitalization in practice & Bringing our languages home: Language revitalization for families*

Leanne Hinton's books, *The green book of language revitalization in practice* (Hinton & Hale, 2001) and *Bringing our languages home: Language revitalization for families* (Hinton, 2013) offer background knowledge about child and adult language learning that informed my project. The thirteen case studies in Hinton's 2013 book show how impactful language learning in the home can be. My project contributes to this by creating a website that can be used at home with children.

Salt water people by David Elliott Sr.

‘Salt water people’ by David Elliott Sr. conveys the essence of Coast Salish Values and spirituality (Elliott, 1983). A lovely element of this book is that it indirectly teaches so much of Salish identity through stories and songs. I have used this book extensively as a teacher.

Paddle to Squaxin gwedzdad- Teachings of our ancestors

Paddle to Squaxin gwedzdad- Teachings of our ancestors (2012) is one of the richest resources developed by a Nation from the annual Canoe Journeys. The reading level is aimed at grade three and therefore accessible to most people, however, it also works for an adult audience with beautiful illustrations, photographs and historical information about the Nation.

The Sooke story: History and heartbeat

The Sooke Museum has many of my family’s items on display and I have taken pictures of them for the website. The museum staff published the book *The Sooke story: History and heartbeat* (Sooke Region Museum, 2004) for which my family was interviewed and also did illustrations for some of our historical events. I used this resource as a cross reference for the information I gather from the community.

That was our way of life

That was our way of life (Lazzar Johnson, 1990) is a wonderful small book based on the memories of Susan Lazzar Johnson, a T’Sou-ke Elder who was one of granny Ida’s younger sisters. The stories were told by Susan and transcribed, edited and

compiled by Kathy Johannesson. Because it is told by Susan, when I read the book, it is like Auntie Susan is sitting right beside me telling me her memories in her own words. We all have a unique way of speaking and what has been captured in this book allows those that knew her to feel her presence through reading the stories told as she said them. I refer most to this book with what I wrote on the website. Although it is a mere 44 pages, it relates well to my family and many of the main ideas of the website.

Learn to read at Starfall

Learn to read at Starfall is a free online English language reading and speaking learning website (Starfall, 2002). It is the primary website I use with my grade one students during computer lab classes and it inspired me to create a fun interactive website for children and others to learn T'Sou-ke language and culture. On Starfall, the user starts at single word games such as 'all about me' where they click the mouse to create their personalized avatar. From here they click to enter various rooms of a modern day house that teaches the language. As the user increases reading fluency, the game increases in reading level. Although photographs with cartoon sketches are the primary back drop of my website, the user can select the categories of interest to read and learn about like on Starfall.

The stickleback: Evidence of evolution?

This article is a scientific discussion about the evolutionary survival of the stickleback fish (Catchpoole, 2009). The article points to physical features of the fish, such as its spiked back, and explains how over hundreds of millions of years the

stickleback fish have used such amour to survive. This article is an example of a reference that I used to refer to when connecting T'Sou-ke oral stories to the outer world. Although this is a scientific article, it discusses the stickleback fish as a species that has evolved from fish into philosophers. When I am in T'Sou-ke, I hear speakers referring to this analogy and the stickleback is on a lot of our artwork such as paddles and drums. T'Sou-ke is a very small nation with a language that is sleeping. Nobody is currently speaking our language fluently. Chief Gordon Planes says that our people are like the stickleback fish because we are small but strong and stick together. Rather than going extinct we thrive in our ever-changing environment.

XEN,SEN I SENĆOFEN by T'Sou-ke Nation Cultural Youth Society

XEN,SEN I SENĆOFEN is a T'Sou-ke language book created by the T'Sou-ke Nation Cultural Youth Society that uses photographs and phrases to match in English and T'Sou-ke SENĆOFEN (Society, 2007). They put together this resource with the support of STOLČEĽ John Elliott, Lindy Elliott and the T'Sou-ke band youth leaders. Each page has a photograph of T'Sou-ke children doing actions such as brushing their hair with the SENĆOFEN words under it and the English words on the bottom. The most obvious drawbacks of the book is the English translation throughout (rather than allowing the images to speak for themselves) and the missing audio for the learner to hear and practice the words aloud. It is noteworthy however that the photographs of the T'Sou-ke children show the variation of what the children of T'Sou-ke actually look like. Many T'Sou-ke people are of mixed ancestry and often due not fulfill the stereotype of how Indigenous children “look.” This was an important consideration as I created an image for my

website of a T'Sou-ke child that is inclusive to all T'Sou-ke people in some way. Overall the book is well done.

First Voices website

The website First Voices, developed in part by STOLČEĽ from WŚÁNEĆ, is a basic foundation of SENĆOFEN (STOLČEĽ, First Voices , 2000). The methodology employed by First Voices is self-motivated and self-paced learning. Nobody is forcing a rigid structure upon the learner, rather the learner approaches the experience on their own. On *First Voices* the learner can hear a commonly accepted pronunciation of words or phrases. The learner can replay these audio files at her/his own pace. First Voices has unlimited access as it is a free website. However, because it is an online dictionary it is not always practical in everyday dialogue, but it can be used to establish or create the tools for improving day-to-day speaking. By increasing the frequency of everyday use of the language and ongoing updates to the webpage, the words and phrases available at First Voices will increase in number. First Voices is an invaluable resource for language learning and the audio quality is excellent.

First Voices Kids

The First Voices Kids (FVK) webpage retrieved from displays 49 icons that represent 49 of the Indigenous languages and dialects in BC. The user selects their language/dialect icon and the page opens to a link with a few words and phrases (STOLČEĽ, First voices Kids, 2003). Depending on the language, the page may have more or less content. There is an icon for SENĆOFEN but not for the T'Sou-ke dialect.

FVK has established the basic programming for an interactive learner-directed game to hear and replay the language. At the time of this paper, this site is still under construction. Therefore, I was able to use it in parts but not entirely. The existing page has a limited number of images and vocabulary words. In the future, I would like to work with FVK to add photographs of Siaosun and our CHUP'ETZ (canoe) and traditional seafood.

A gap in most of the literature and programs I reviewed is the lack of practical tools to teach students, and assist teachers in learning about the T'sou-ke people and advancing the goal of language revitalization. What inspired me about the literature and programs I reviewed is that they are authentic, rich and engaging so that people will want to use them. I kept this in mind as I created the website, like the literature and programs I liked the most, most importantly, it must be rewarding enough so that people will choose to do it in their free time.

Methodology

Research Question & Supporting Questions

The guiding question I addressed in this project is: What does it mean to me to be T'Sou-ke? The secondary questions I pondered in exploring the main question, were: What are the things that we do to explore and enhance "being T'Sou-ke." For example, what are the preparations to get ready for a canoe journey? When do we start and what is involved? What are the songs, stories and teachings we will share when we arrive on the shores of other villages and how will we show them gratitude? What are my reflections as a T'Sou-ke person as I experienced all of these things in my life? What did I learn

about T'Sou-ke language and culture growing up as T'Sou-ke? As a T'Sou-ke person what do you think people should know about whom we are and what guides us in living a traditional life? What language goes with this?

Chief Gordon Planes believes our youth can be powerful leaders in carrying on the language and knowledge of our T'Sou-ke Elders and ancestors and so I also pondered the questions: What roles do our children play in preparing for a canoe journey? What roles do I play as an individual whom has prepared for canoe journeys? How do our children fit in to our cultural preparations and practices and what do the children have to say about this? How did I fit into T'Sou-ke language and culture growing up and now as a teacher? What is a fun and engaging way to present this in a language learning website?

Method

I collected archival information for this website and I will continue to collect more (for use with permission) to further develop the website after this project is over. I drew from the community stories that have been shared with me over the years, some stories that are published and archived in the Sooke and BC museums. I sought the advice and knowledge from respected knowledge holders in my family and community to confirm the accuracy of what I put in the website and to decide what best reflects who we are as a Nation. The knowledge holders are: my cousin Chief Gordon Planes who leads language initiatives for our nation; Shirley Alphonse, our Nation's spiritual leader; and T'Sou-ke Elders and knowledge holders; Willow Planes, Janet Hansen, Germaine Sutherland, and Jeff Welch. These people helped guide me to determine which teachings to include on the website.

Community members were invited to contribute to the content of the website through a call-out in the T'Sou-ke Nation monthly newsletter. The youth group hand delivers the monthly newsletter to every home in our community. This is the primary method of communication in our Nation. I got permission to put my call-out in the newsletter to let the community know that I was developing a website about T'Sou-ke culture and language. The ad detailed the ideas and intention of the website and that band members could contact me if they wished to be involved in any way. I was hoping for any traditional songs, stories, food harvesting & preservation, spiritual practices and other language information that community members would like to submit to me by email or by phone to be included on the website. Due to the minimal response I received at that time, I felt it would be best to create the website as an auto-ethnographic representation. I think that once the community has a chance to see the website I have created, they will respond. An advantage of have a website is that it is not stagnant as it can be added to at anytime; I can add the contributions from the community for many years to come.

Outcomes

I developed an interactive website about our identity and practices as a Nation through my perspective. This is a teaching tool for healing and reconnection. In addition to the website, I wrote this paper as a final report that provides background information about the website project. I have included my process for this project as a possible roadmap for other students and language revitalization practitioners who are thinking about developing a website based on their traditions. I also included recommendations

on how to expand upon this website and this language learning initiative. This will allow the website to grow as one's fluency increases. A strength of this website is that it can be added to or changed with time. Most importantly, this website will be useful for my Nation to know more about who they are and access stories and recordings, and, it will be useful to parents and teachers as a resource to support Aboriginal PLOs in K-7 and the general public to better understand the T'Sou-ke people. HI'SWEKE SIEM!

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