

# *Nts'abm a Gyiyaaksi'i*

## Our Village Out to Sea

### A Resource for Language Revitalization

Margaret Anderson

Sm'algyax is a gravely endangered language. There are now fewer than 200 fully fluent speakers, and at the present time the youngest mother-tongue speakers are in their sixties. Despite valiant efforts on the part of Ts'msyen Elders and educators, the slide towards extinction seems almost inevitable. However despite the long odds against the survival of the language, there is some reason to hope that it can be revitalized in the future. One of the most important factors in this is the wealth of audio recordings and transcribed texts that are available for future learners. The text of *Nts'abm a Gyiyaaksi'i* included below is an example of this wealth.

*Nts'abm a Gyiyaaksi'i* – Our Village Out to Sea, included in its entirety below, is an *ada'wx* (true telling) recounted by Violet Robinson of Hartley Bay in 1978. Mrs. Robinson recorded a series of stories that she recalled hearing in her youth, which she agreed to do as an oral legacy for future generations. The recording was made by Margaret Seguin [Anderson], who was then documenting Sm'algyax through a contract with the National Museum of Man (now Canadian Museum of History), where copies of the materials she recorded were deposited for permanent conservation. The tape of this story was transcribed into draft written form in 2003, by Violet's granddaughter, Tammy Blumhagen, who by then was a teacher of the language; the transcription was reviewed by fluent speakers including Clarence Anderson, Doug Brown, Marj Brown, Sampson Collinson, Darlene Leland, Theresa Lowther, Ellen Mason, Velna Nelson, Fred Ridley, and Tina Robinson, working along with Margaret Anderson.

Why are recordings/texts such as *Nts'abm a Gyiyaaksi'i* significant for the future hope of Sm'algyax language revitalization? This can be seen by understanding a lesson from a language that has been revitalized from the brink of extinction. One such notable recent success is the Algonquian language that has been literally brought

back to life by the Mashatucket Pequot community. When this community effort began, there had not been a speaker of their language for six generations; the language was represented only by scattered written records. The effort to revitalize it began with collecting all of the documents (such as deeds, wills, Bible translations, etc.) that could be found with words or phrases in the language, and working with linguists specializing in closely related languages to reconstruct the language. Several community members undertook to learn the reconstructed language, working with a unique graduate program in linguistics offered at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. They succeeded, and even fostered a new generation of young speakers by using the language with their young children and teaching it in the community. The future of this language is not secure yet, but the startling achievements to date have been recognized by the award of a MacArthur Genius award to Jessie Littledoe Baird for her achievements in this initiative.<sup>1</sup>

In comparison to the status of Mashantucket Pequot, Ts'msyen Sm'algyax has a wealth of resources as a foundation for future revitalization efforts. Linguist Dell Hymes has argued that there are three necessary types of documentation required for language revitalization to succeed: a thorough dictionary that lists the meaningful units and how they are used; a grammar that explicates the patterns of the language; and sufficient texts that show how the morphemes and words of the language are used in a variety of genres. All of these resources exist for Sm'algyax. Several dictionaries have been published, the most widely used being Dunn's 1978 Practical Dictionary. There is now an online dictionary, the Sm'algyax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary (Sm'algyax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary, <http://web.unbc.ca/~smalgyax/>, which has almost 7,000 entries, 3,000 sound files and over 2,000 images).

There are also several grammars, including a user-friendly one in use in the community: Visible Grammar, Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Grammar Resources (Anderson and Ignace 2008), which uses colour coding to demonstrate the most common sentence patterns of the language. Finally, there are a fair number of recordings and transcribed texts for Sm'algyax. Furthermore, many of the texts that have been transcribed to date are now included in the computer database that links to the lexicon that documents words and morphemes, adding to the richness of the lexical data that underlies the dictionary and simultaneously shining light on nuances of the texts themselves. The type of knowledge that results will be demonstrated following the transcription and translation of *Nts'abm a Gyaaksi'i* as told by Violet Robinson. Only the text and free translation are included here, though examples drawn from the detailed analysis that was done before the text was added to the database are discussed below. CDs with the audio of this story have been provided to Mrs. Robinson's family and to the Wap Sigatgyet, which develops learning resources for Sm'algyax for use in schools and the community.

1 For more on the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project see <http://web.mit.edu/norvin/www/wopanaak.html> and <http://www.wlrp.org/>

## Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i – Our Village out to Sea

**Adawga gwa'a nah gyik 'nax'nuuyu, adawxs dip gwasda, la likleet.**

*This is a story I also heard, their story, the people of long ago.*

**Wila waal, aa, nts'abm ya gyiyaaksi'i.**

*How it happened, ah, to our people from out to sea.<sup>2</sup>*

**Nah sm'ooyitgada 'yuuta gwa'a.**

*This man was the chief, it is said.*

**Dawila silootgitgal dm ga'uuum hadaniit,**

*Then they set out to fish blackcod,*

**dawila silootga gaxsoo dm uum hadaniit,**

*then the canoes set out to fish blackcod,*

**'nii dzaba gyeda gwii lawil aksyaagwa gooym, dm 'maga hadanii.**

*that's what those people did, at the beginning of spring, catch blackcod.*

**Wayi gwaaygal lawaalsga sm'ooyitga:**

*Now this, it is said, is what the chief did:*

**dawlat wil goot'il la aamsgabuu 'mik'maga gyet,**

*when he thought that the people had caught quite a few,*

**da'ik wila sigyootk uks goot, k'winuu hoon gwii.**

*then he would set off to go out, to ask for that fish.*

**Wayi, 'nii 'nawaans dip gwii.**

*Well, that's what they did.*

**Nagats'aaw gyeda akadi, la 'ap k'üül nwil 'makt,**

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<sup>2</sup> The fluent speakers who helped analyze this text all identified 'the village out to sea' as Gitxaala, but since Mrs. Robinson did not use the name of the village in telling the story, it has not been included in the translation. Indirect allusion is a common device in Sm'algayx – for example it is often heard when fishermen communicate over a CB radio, often referring to 'the place across' or 'where we were yesterday' rather than providing a place name.

*Some of the people didn't, it was just the one time when they caught fish,*

**dawil akat gyik da'axlgit.**

*and then they couldn't do it again.*

**Wayi la luhaxhaaxgitgal gagootl gyet,**

*So the people were fed up, it is said,*

**La luhaxhaaxga gagooda gyet sgwaay akadi lip da'axlgit gapl na güült.**

*The people were fed up because they weren't able to eat their catch.*

**Dawil hawtgitga k'oolda sup'asit,**

*Then one of their young people said,*

**“wayi,” dayagat, “dzida la'ik dit doga na k'yenu dm di xswooxsgu,”  
dayagat,**

*“well,” he said, “if he takes my fish again I'll dive with him,” he said,*

**“dm di xswooxsgu,”**

*“I will dive with him,”*

**Dayagat wudi k'wil sgatgida da hawt.**

*He said it, he seemed cocky and he said it.*

**Wayi waaltgat, dzabitgal loop dat sits'alda k'oxl,**

*So he did this, he made a weight (rock) by making a loop of withes,*

**xlm dakla looba gwa'a da dit lip lumagit da dit dzaba gik k'үүл.**

*he tied it around this stone and put it over himself, and then made another one.*

**Gan la di heelda 'maktga, da uks go'iksas sm'ooygida gwa'a**

*Therefore when he had caught a lot, then this chief came out,*

**dat wil k'winuu gwii, hadanii gisga gyet.**

*and then he asked for that, the blackcod from the people.*

**Di txal goos Dzoogali gal waa 'yuuta gwa'a.**

*He also went alongside Dzoogali - this man's name, it is said.*

**“Wayi, lip doxl,” dayagat, “gal, txal k'yan, dm lip doxt.”**

*“Well, take them yourself,” he said, “come on, alongside, take them yourself.”*

**Wayi ‘nii gal waalt, txal k’yan da awaa xsoo gwa’a,**

*So, that’s what he did, he came alongside this canoe,*

**dat lip logm ‘nak’ada da dmt gaa, da’al lu maxda, lu maxda ‘yuuta gwa’a, aa, naht sits’altida**

*and he reached in himself and he was going to take it, but he [Dzoogali] put it on, the man put on this, ah, he made a loop of it*

**dit lip lu magit das ‘niit, dawilat di xswooxsgit.**

*and put one around himself, and then he dove with him.*

**Düüt t’a, wayi al ‘ap ligi uks daawla gyeda gwa’a, wilat ha’ligoodit, gyigyetga.**

*They died, well, maybe they fell overboard, that’s what they thought, the people.*

**Wah, ‘nii wil silootgit, la batsgida gwii, ‘yuuta gwa’a,**

*Well, that’s when they set out, when that one arrived, this man,*

**nwilwilaaysgitga, nwilwilaaysgisga dzagit.**

*his relatives, the relatives of the one who died.*

**Dawlat, haldm k’oldit gya’wn, ‘yaga t’ala abuum goo dogit,**

*Then, they were getting ready to leave, packing down a few things that they took,*

**dil na ganiinksgitga, na, dawila, waayt,**

*with their spouses, their; then, they paddled,*

**k’yeexgida gya’wn, wilaayda dm luk’axt.**

*escaping now, they knew they were all going to die.*

**Dawila k’ala daawl diya gwa’a, Lax Galts’abi’i.**

*Then they went up to this place, to Old Town.*

**‘Nii gooyt, ‘nii wil huut da gwii.**

*That's where they went, that's where they ran away to.*

**Dawila gwinxsk'amgo'intgida 'yuuta gwa'a, asga sm'ooygit diya gyigyaani, Lax Galts'ap**

*Then he put himself at the mercy, it is said, of this man, the chief up the inlet, Old Town*

**mela goo wila waalt.**

*and told what had happened to him.*

**Dawila gawdi txo'ondida dip gwa'a, dawilat logm t'ala dm gabida da xsooyi.**

*After they had finished feeding them, then they put their provisions into the canoe.*

**Dawila k'ala magida da lax t'aam k'a'at,**

*Then he took them up to the Lake of the K'a'at (cane),*

**'niit wil k'ala magat, 'ni'nii wilt dzo'nt.**

*this is where he put them, that's where he had them live.*

**Heelda wineeya t'ala di asga k'ala aksa gwa'a.**

*There was plenty of food up this river.*

**Ts'm t'aa gwa'a, 'niisga wil dzox**

*At this lake, that's where they lived.*

**Wayi la ts'iiga muu gyediya a gyiyaaksi'i,**

*Well, when the people from out there heard rumours of this,*

**da, la ts'iiga muut, a gwa'a habas dip gwii, Lax Galts'ap,**

*then, when they heard, this is where they went, Old Town,*

**ganat k'alat goot dat niist.**

*therefore they went up there (to Old Town) to see.*

**Akadi niil ligi goo a gwii dzi ligil k'yent.**

*They didn't see anything there, or if there was anything there at all.*

**Wayi al gwaay gal lawaalsga gyigyeda gwa'a,**

*Now this is what those people did there,*

**güüldida maay, ada hoon, siluunat, ada sami,**  
*they gathered berries, and fish, dried them, and meat,*

**wil liksgyigyeda sami, samim wanm, ol,**  
*different kinds of meat, deer meat, bear,*

**‘nii siluunat, dat gik gyisi sgawta da awaa sm’ooygida gwa’a, naa int habilboot.**

*that’s what they dried, and then transported it down to this chief, the one who took care of them.*

**Wayi ‘nii wila waals dip gwii da gwii,**  
*So, this is what happened to them there,*

**wah, al gwa’a gal nlawaalt.**  
*this is what, it is said, happened to them.*

**Sgüügal wasga sm’ooygitga gwii, misola, wasas sm’ooygida gwa’a, moksgm ol,**  
*That chief had a blanket, kermode bear, the blanket of this chief, white bear*

**ada txa galaxsgit, sigwida’ats’gida gwii,**  
*and it had all its claws, made into this coat,*

**ada ‘ap luk’wil mooksm, ‘ap luk’wil hoysk, ada txagaaydit.**  
*and it was very white, really attractive, and it had a hood.*

**Wayi da yaawkt, dat ‘nii hoyda gwa’a, da luulgit da galts’ipts’ap.**  
*Well, whenever he hosted a feast, then this is what he wore, and feasted the other villages.*

**Wayi ‘nii ‘na ndzagn gooda sm’ooygit di ya gyiyaaksi’i.**  
*Now, the chief from out to sea was very impressed by it.*

**Luk’wil ndzagn gooda gwii ada txa’nii goo wila gyoo sm’ooygit.**  
*He was really impressed by this and everything that the chief was doing.*

**Wayi k’ala daawl gisga awasga wekt a gyigyaaani**

*So he went to his brother up the channel there*

**at dm wilat k'winuu gwida'ats'a gwa'a.**

*to ask for this coat.*

**Gaxba hawt dmt gyiikt diya, aa, txa'nii goo nahawt, dmt gyiikt.**

*Sometimes he said he would buy it, he did everything in his power to buy it.*

**Wayi ayn 'walgit, 'walga 'yuuta gwa'a, akadi.**

*No, he didn't allow it, this man didn't allow it, no.*

**Wayi xbiisgat lusgüü gwii, lugup'l xbiisa gwa'a, k'üül nakwduunda, da k'üül nts'aawt.**

*Now it's said that was in a box. This box was double, one outside, one inside.*

**Wayi 'nii wil lusgüü gwida'ats'a gwa'a.**

*So this is where he kept this coat.*

**Wah, 'nii wila waal da gwii.**

*Well, that's how it was there.*

**K'üülda taaym layk 'yaga goyt'iks dip gwa'a,**

*One time when these people again came down,*

**layk 'yaga go'iks dip gwa'a, at gyisi sgaw,**

*they came down again, to deliver down [the supplies],*

**K'am ligi didaba k'yanya gyiyaaksa**

*Every once in a while those from out to sea came*

**da'ik k'ala daawlt, a 'nii wineeya gan waalt.**

*then they'd go up again, because of the food supplies, that's why they did so.*

**At gik k'yanda sm'ooygida gwa'a.**

*Again, this is what this chief did.*

**Wayi k'üülda taym, wayi la'al 'ap 'naga dzoxit diya gwa'a gyigaani,**

*Now one time, now they had lived for quite a while at this place up the river;*

**k'üülda taym dayk gyisigo'iksga dzogitsga lax t'aaga.**

*one time again the people living at the lake came down.*

**K'wil huudida gwa'a gyisi sgaw wineeya gisga sm'ooygitga.**

*These people who had run away brought food to the chief.*

**Da'al lubaa xsoo gwa'a, gyidza libagayt k'yan,**

*But then this canoe came in, they were almost in a panic,*

**ts'a ptoolit, 'niit wil li'yüüdit, sm'ooygida gwa'a.**

*in the house platform, that's where he hid them, this chief.*

**Da'al txo'on, bax luulgit, bax hukhuutk.**

*Then he fed them (the ones in the canoe), invited them up, called them up.*

**Wayi liksgye'ensga k'ooltga 'yuuta.**

*Well, one man got suspicious.*

**Sm liksgye'enda goo wila waal dip gwa'a,**

*He noticed that something was going on with these people,*

**wudi gidza k'wil libaas da lawaal.**

*they seemed to be almost afraid of what was happening.*

**Da lawila akadi aaml la yaa gooda 'yuuta gwa'a; sgüü goo wila waals dip gwa'a.**

*And this guy still wasn't satisfied; there must be something going on with these people.*

**Da hawgatga sm'ooygit "wayi sm ndzusda xbiisda" dayagat, "sm ndzusda xbiisda."**

*Then the chief said "Now, bring out the box," he said, "bring the box."*

**Dawila t'aam gaadit dip gwa'a xbiis da gwa'a, liluungit,**

*And then they brought it out, this box, his slaves,*

**dawlat k'agit, dawilit uks gaa wasa gwii.**

*and he opened it, and took out that blanket.*

**"Wah" dayagada sm'ooygida gwa'a "dzi maln n yaawsas wegii da**

**gwa'a," dayagat.**

*"Well," said the chief, "tell my brother I remember him with this gift," he said.*

**"Dm xk'eeyldida naksu," dayaga 'yuuta, daya sm'ooygida gwa'a.**

*"It will be a gift from my wife," said the man, said this chief.*

**Sm 'am niidzas dip gwa'a gwii, wil lu, aa,**

*As soon as they saw what that was, in this, ah,*

**wilaayda al la 'nakda hasaga 'yuuta, sm'ooygit di ya gyiyaaksi'i.**

*they knew the man had wanted it for a long time, this chief from out to sea.*

**La 'nakl da hasaxda wasa gwa'a, wayi sm k'am niidzas dip gwii**

*He had wanted this blanket a long time, so just as soon as they saw it*

**dawila sigyootkt, dawila silm yeltgit, haydza 'yuuta gwa'a.**

*then they left right away, they returned home, this man sent it away.*

**Wayi 'ni'nii wila waal da gwii gan ksi ax'axgas dip gwa'a.**

*So that's how that happened, how those people got saved.*

**Nah dm al 'ap lu 'waays dip gwa'a**

*These people would have been discovered*

**wil k'aym ts'm stuup'l lu want**

*where they were close by in the back of the house*

**wil lut li'yüüdaga sm'ooygitga.**

*where the chief had hidden them in.*

**Wayi 'ni'nii gyik adawga Gitk'a'ata gwa'a,**

*Now this is another story about the Gitk'a'ata,*

**'nii adawxt da gwa'a, wila waal gwa'a.**

*This is their story, this is how it happened.*

**'Nii siwaada k'amksiwah da "good deed."**

*That's what the white man calls a "good deed."*

**'Nii waalsgida Gitk'a'ata,**

*That's what the Gitk'a'ata did,*

**ama wil habilboolsga huudit.**

*they took good care of those runaways.*

**Wayi 'ni'nii gyik nax'nuuyu adawxs dip gwasda da gwa'a.**

*Well, this I also heard told by the olden people from here.*

This story is included in the computer database of Sm'algyax as an interlinear text analyzed to the level of morphemes, with each word or word part linked to an entry in the lexical component of the database. The database is maintained using FieldWorks software.<sup>3</sup> Figure 1 shows a screen shot of what the interlinear analysis looks like when a text is open for analysis, showing the words, morphemes (smallest meaningful units), and several categories of information about the lexical entries that are linked to each morpheme/word.

There are now over 120 such texts in the database. Over half of them are, like *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i*, transcriptions of recordings that were made over the past five decades by fluent speakers working with linguists. Dorothy Brown and Kathleen Vickers from Gitxaala recorded texts with John Dunn in the late 1960s; Alfred Anderson, Clarence Anderson, Louisa Anderson, Flora Eaton, Cora Robinson, and Violet Robinson from Txałgiw (Hartley Bay) made recordings with Margaret Anderson in the 1970s and 1980s; Alfred Eaton from New Metlakata, Alaska made several tapes with Margaret Anderson when he visited Hartley Bay in 1979;<sup>4</sup> and Mildred Wilson from Txałgiw made a series of recordings with Fumiko Sasama during the 1990s and early 2000s. These texts are doubly precious because the audio recordings from which they were transcribed are now the only records of the voices of these speakers, all of whom have now passed on. There are also a number of audio recordings that have been made in the process of curriculum development projects through the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority and/or the Wap Sigatgyet, including recordings by a large number of fluent speakers of several thousand of the example sentences in the online Sm'algyax Living Legacy Talking Dictionary, which is pro-3 FieldWorks is available free on the web at SIL.org. This software facilitates inclusion of audio, video and image data linked to entries, and has been used to maintain the Sm'algyax database for the past five years; prior to that LinguaLinks software was used, and before that Shoebox; these are both also SIL software packages.

4 Several other speakers made tapes with Margaret Anderson, but these have not yet been analyzed or included in the database. There are, of course, a large number of recordings made by speakers that are kept by their family members.

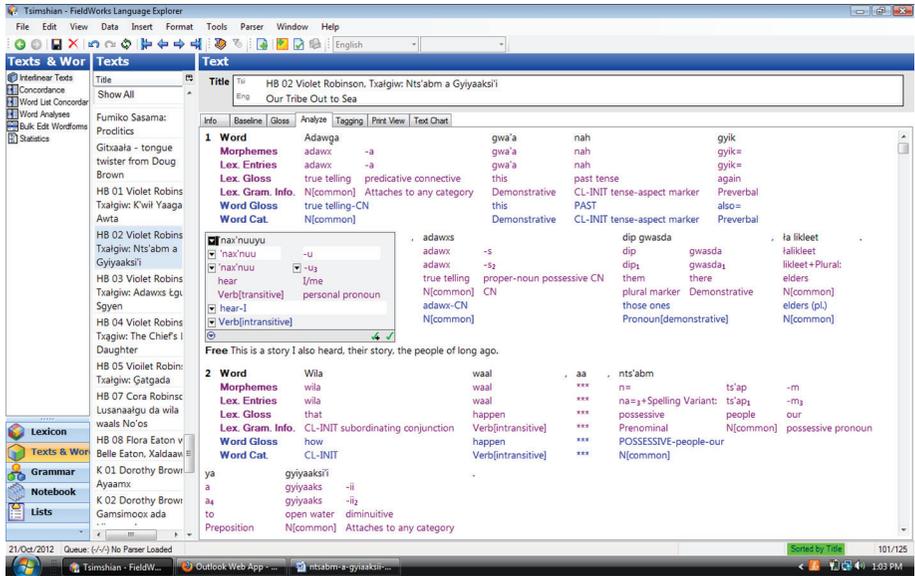


Figure 1. Sample of interlinear analysis using Fieldworks software.

duced by exporting the lexical database described in this chapter. While the example of the Mashantucket Pequot demonstrates that it is feasible to revitalize a language when there are no speakers and no audio records, having such recordings allows for far greater confidence in the process. As more languages verge on extinction, the race to document and archive language data in the form of recordings and analyses for future revitalization efforts becomes more crucial; this will include recordings and texts such as *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaks'i*.

The balance of the texts in the Sm'algyax database are re-writings of stories that were written down by Ts'msyen ethnographer William Beynon during the 1930s and sent to Franz Boas. That collection of over 250 texts was mis-catalogued in the library at Columbia University for over four decades, but was located in the 1980s and made available on microfilm. About a third of them have now been re-written in the orthography currently used by the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority. Some of these have been published, such as those appearing in the collection *Suwilaaymsga na Ganiyaatgm*, which was published by the school district. Other texts from this collection have been used to teach Sm'algyax in the programs offered by UNBC, and audio recordings of these were made by contemporary fluent speakers such as Doug Brown and Velna Nelson so that there will be an oral version as well as a written text and translation.

Each of the texts in the database is a repository of knowledge of Sm'algyax available for future generations to draw from as they strive to revitalize the language.

The knowledge that is there includes information on all aspects of the language: the sounds and variations in pronunciation; the meaningful units and words of the language and the patterns into which they are combined; the patterns and variations of phrases and sentences and the nuances of style in various contexts; and cultural information. This information will contribute to the language bank that will help the Ts'msyen revitalize Sm'algyax in future. In the following section I will illustrate each of these aspects with reference to the text above.

## Layers of Knowledge available from *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i*

### Knowledge about Sounds

The audio recording of Violet Robinson telling this story is, in itself, a valuable resource for future language revitalization efforts with respect to knowledge of the sounds of the language. Such recordings allow learners who have no access to immersion in a living speech community to develop an 'ear' for the sounds and rhythms of the language as spoken by esteemed experts. Mrs. Robinson was a first language speaker of the language who was born in 1907; she generally preferred to speak Sm'algyax, though she was fluent in English as well.

In addition to the value of the audio recordings *per se* in training the ears of future speakers, there are also potential resources for revitalization in the written text. The baseline of *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i* as shown above is written in the practical orthography that is preferred by the Ts'msyen Sm'algyax Authority and Wap Sigatgyet. The practical orthography used for Sm'algyax was developed over a number of years by Dunn, and was confirmed in a number of workshops with Ts'msyen educators and fluent speakers of Sm'algyax. The orthography is roughly phonemic (it represents all the distinctive sounds of the language, and each symbol corresponds to each sound without confusion), and is fairly easily mastered by fluent speakers as well as second language speakers. There are a number of publications in which the spellings used in the practical orthography are shown with their IPA phonetic transcriptions, including the first major publication illustrating this orthography, Dunn's Practical Dictionary of Sm'algyax (1978). The writing system is based on the same principles as the orthographies used for the related languages Gitxsanimx and Nisga'a, which were developed by Rigsby, working with fluent speakers of those language. The Sm'algyax orthography has been in use since the late 1970s, and there is a substantial body of materials printed with this writing system.

Learners who can read the writing system find that they can discern sounds more clearly by reading the text while listening to audio recordings such as *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i*. This is crucial because Sm'algyax has almost twice as many distinctive sounds as English does, and includes a number of types of sounds with which English speakers are unfamiliar, such as uvular stops and glottalized or ejective consonants,

which appear in the line from the story here as underlined characters (uvulars) and letters preceded or followed by an apostrophe (ejective or glottalized sounds), both seen in this phrase: **Dawila** k'ala magida da lax t'aam k'a'at. The skill of discriminating all the sounds of the language will be fundamental for any future project to revitalize Sm'algyax, and underlies the ability to actually produce the sounds accurately. Having carefully transcribed texts matched with audio recordings of fluent voices such as Mrs. Robinson's is a valuable tool for revitalizing the language.

### Knowledge of Words and Word Formation

Mastering the vocabulary of a language is, of course, fundamental to its acquisition, and a good inventory of these is essential for future revitalization. Incorporation of texts such as *Nts'abm ya Gyiyaaksi'i* into the lexical database for Sm'algyax continues to contribute to our knowledge of the words and idioms of the language, because, while we already have an extensive dictionary of the language, it is far from complete, and there is much yet to be discovered and added. The following, for example, are words or idioms that are attested so far only in this text, and which were added to the dictionary after the text was analyzed in the database (shown here in root forms):

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>dzo'n</b>            | <i>have someone live in a place</i>        |
| <b>gwinxsk'amgo'itk</b> | <i>put oneself at the mercy of someone</i> |
| <b>lugup'l</b>          | <i>double</i>                              |
| <b>'mik'mak</b>         | <i>plural of 'mak, to catch fish</i>       |
| <b>'na ndzagn goot</b>  | <i>be impressed by something</i>           |
| <b>ts'iiga muu</b>      | <i>hear rumours of</i>                     |

Almost every text included in the database yields such additions to our knowledge of the lexicon of Sm'algyax. Some of these are common usage and were missing from the dictionary simply because no one had yet thought to include them. In other instances fluent speakers who listen to the audio tape of the story recognize the previously undocumented words or idioms, sometimes characterizing them as 'old language' no longer in common usage. In a few cases the undocumented words are ones that none of the speakers has previously heard. Sometimes these words or idioms are transparent – all the parts can be recognized and the meaning is simply the sum total of the word parts, for example **dzo'n** (*have someone live somewhere*), which is made up of a root **dzox** (*to live in a place*) plus a derivational suffix **-n** (*to cause someone to do something*). In other instances the meaning of the idiom is not at all clear from the component parts, such as **'na ndzagn goot** (*be impressed by something*), which includes the words **dzak** (*dead*) and **goot** (*heart*).

### Phrase and Sentence Patterns

As noted above, there are several published grammars of Sm'algyax (Dunn 1978, Mulder 1984, Sasama 2001, Anderson and Ignace 2008), but no one would argue that we yet understand all of its patterns and variations, and of course a language is a living entity that continues to grow and change over time. A discussion of syntax is beyond the scope of this chapter, but it is worth noting that texts are the most valuable tool in figuring out how sentences are structured. For example, one feature of sentence structure that is well-illustrated in Mrs. Robinson's various texts is the connective **-I**, which is used in *irrealis* contexts – that is, it appears in “non-confirmed” sentences when expressing wishes, questioning or negating statements. Here are several examples from this text:

**Wayi gwaaygal lawaalsga sm'ooygitga:**

*Now this, it is said, is what the chief did:*

**dawlat wil goot'il la aamsgabuu 'mik'maga gyet,**

*when he thought that the people had caught quite a few,*

**Wayi la luhaxhaaxgitgal gagootl gyet,**

*So the people were fed up, it is said,*

**Akadi niil ligi goo a gwii dzi ligil k'yenl.**

*They didn't see anything there, or if there was anything there at all.*

**Sgüügal wasga sm'ooygitga gwii, misola, wasas sm'ooygida  
gwa'a, moksgm ol,**

*That chief had a blanket, kermode bear, the blanket of this chief, white bear*

Developing a complete understanding of the usage of forms such as this connective requires a large body of texts that can be examined, identifying when the form occurs. Having over a hundred texts in the database is a start towards ensuring that these patterns can be more fully explained, and understood by future language learners. As we add more texts some of the questions we have now will be answered, and, of course, new questions will emerge.

### Usage

The basic information on meaning and grammar that appears in dictionaries and grammar is sometimes too simple to correctly capture the way that speakers actually employ the resources of their language. Sometimes categories are stretched or played with for rhetorical effect. Becoming attuned to these entails experiencing

sufficient examples of the norm for the surprise to stand out in contrast. In this text, for example, note the relatively unusual pattern in which **sm'ooygit** (a chief), which normally functions as a noun, is used as a verb (to be a chief). **Nah sm'ooygitgada 'yuuta gwa'a**. This man was the chief, it is said. In fact many Sm'algyax words can function in several ways in sentences with appropriate location in the sentence and word endings, etc. A large corpus of texts in which each word is linked to the dictionary database helps to highlight such creative usages.

### Cultural Knowledge

This text includes rich detail on several aspects of Ts'msyen culture: seasonal rounds and the harvesting and processing of food; the role of chiefs and the “social contract” between chiefs and their people; and the value of kindness and gifts and gift-giving. Here are a few key sentences from the text on these topics.

**'nii dzaba gyeda gwii lawil aksyaagwa gooym, dm 'maga hadanii.**

*that's what those people did, at the beginning of spring, catch blackcod.*

**Ła luhaxhaaxga gagooda gyet sgwaay akadi lip da'axlgit gapl na güült.**

*The people were fed up because they weren't able to eat their catch.*

**“Wah” dayagada sm'ooygida gwa'a “dzi maln n yaawsas wegı da gwa'a,” dayagat.**

*“Well,” said the chief, “tell my brother I remember him with this gift,” he said.*

**“Dm xk'eeıldida naksu,” dayaga 'yuuta, daya sm'ooygida gwa'a.**

*“It will be a gift from my wife,” said the man, said this chief.*

**'Nii siwaada k'amksiwah da “good deed.”**

*That's what the white man calls a “good deed.”*

**'Nii waalsgida Gitk'a'ata, ama wil habilboolsga huudit.**

*That's what the Gitk'a'ata did, they took good care of those runaways.*

### Conclusion

The preceding section has given brief examples of the many ways in which *Nts'abm ya Gyıyaaksi'i* is a storehouse of knowledge saved up for future generations to draw on as they strive to revitalize Sm'algyax. The examples of information on the sounds of the language and variations in pronunciation, the meaningful units and words

of the language and the patterns into which they are combined, the patterns and variations of phrases and sentences and the nuances of style in various contexts, and cultural values that are found in this one text can be multiplied a hundred-fold when a large sample of texts is available. The effort to expand the collection of texts and to analyze them carefully is one contribution to Sm'algyax revitalization that can be made at this point, and a number of people continue to work on this and other initiatives to ensure the future of the language. The language may be used by fewer people in the future, and the contexts in which it is used may be reduced, but if sufficient knowledge is stored up now, Ts'msyen people will have choices in the future about how they will use this legacy.

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